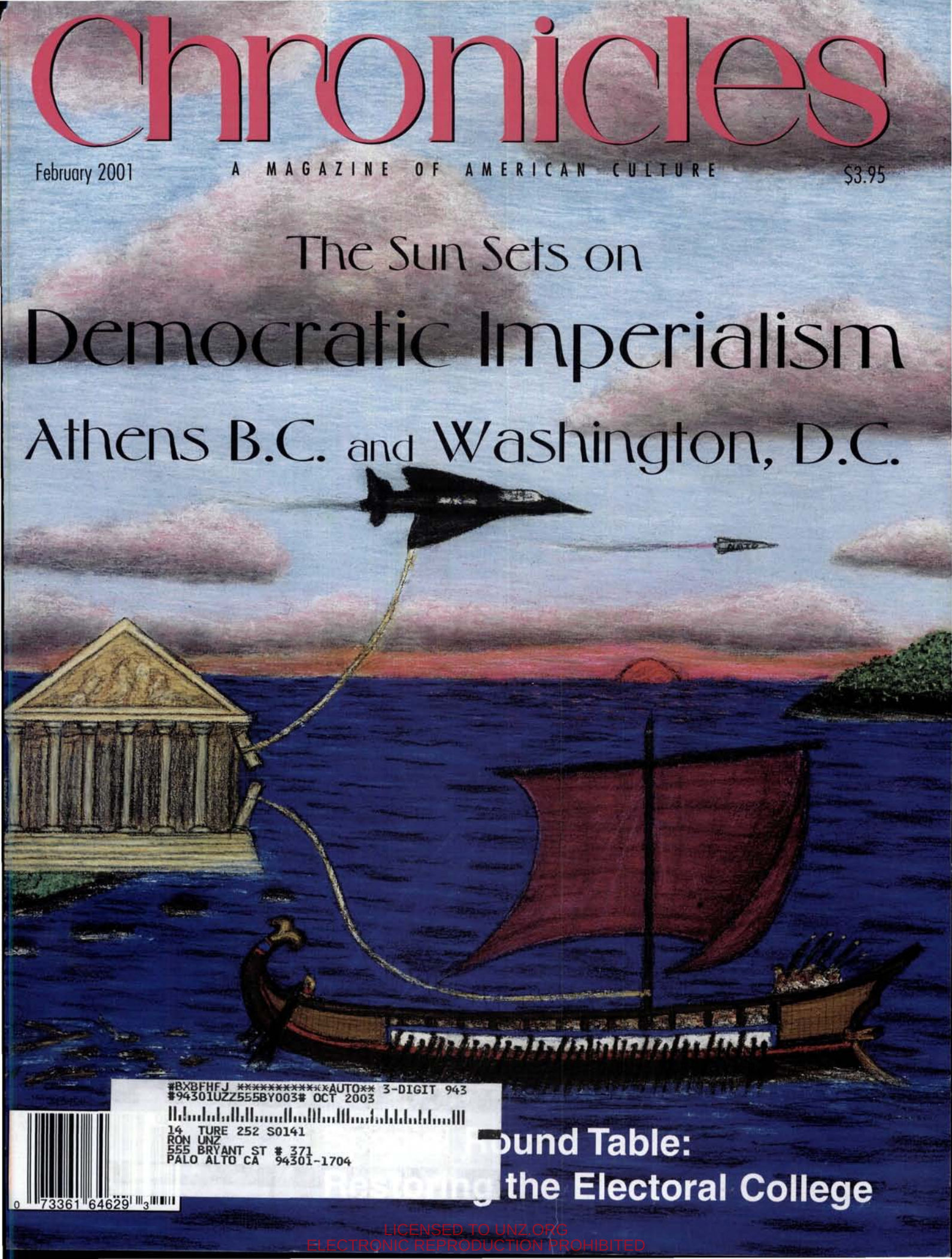
Chronicles

February 2001 A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE $3.95

The Sun Sets on Democratic Imperialism

Athens B.C. and Washington, D.C.



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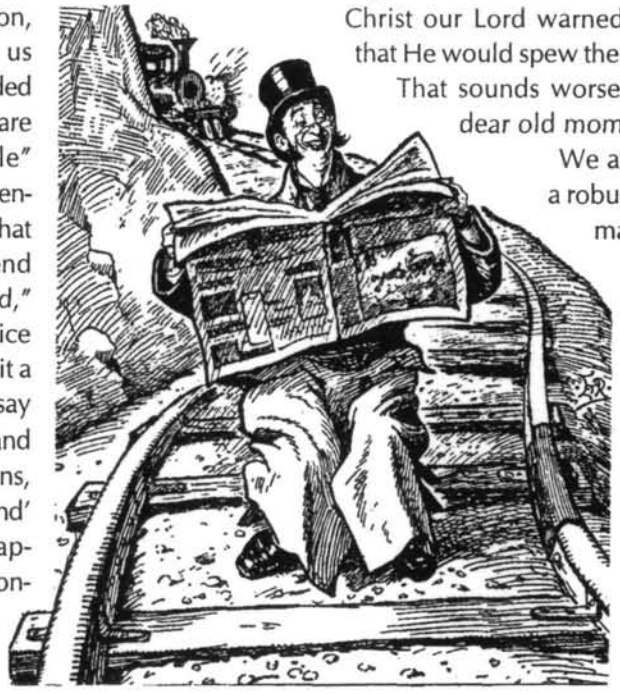
Tired of Fuzzy, Feel-Good Catholic Journalism ?

There was a curious exchange in the Nov. 28, 1999 *Our Sunday Visitor* (*OSV*) between letter-writer Jack Ferguson and M. Francis Mannion, who's been writing the Q&A feature in *OSV*. Ferguson complained that certain of Mannion's answers are "fuzzy." Indeed! For example, Mannion said that "God...may be referred to as 'she'.... However....God is normatively understood and spoken of as 'Father'.... There is a question of proper balance...." Balance between what? Between feminism and Revelation?

Ferguson asked Mannion, "Why can't you give it to us straight...?" Ferguson concluded with this indictment: "You are too afraid to offend people" (which could be said of *OSV* generally). Mannion answered that he is indeed afraid to offend people, "appropriately afraid," adding that "I avoid the practice whenever I can, not thinking it a virtue." Mannion went on to say that he tries to give "subtle" and "balanced" answers to questions, which "often creates a 'both/and' rather than an 'either/or' approach to issues." Mannion concluded by saying that if he wrote in the no-nonsense manner Ferguson was urging, "My mother...would slap me...."



Obviously, Mannion's mother is *not afraid to offend people*: A slap in the face is quite offensive. Nothing fuzzy about her! And, in an ironic way, she's onto something that applies directly to Catholic journalism. The Church is deeply divided between the orthodox and the dissenters — the situation *is* "either/or." In this context, fuzzy Catholic publications such as *OSV* and many diocesan papers which try to please everyone will ultimately please no one. Moreover, if Catholic periodicals avoid offending anyone, they will likely not inspire or energize anyone either. Which is why feel-good Catholic journalism is in decline.

St. Peter noted that the Gospel is inherently a "rock of offense" (1 Pet. 2:8). Indeed, inoffensive writing about the Faith could have dire consequences, for Christ our Lord warned "the lukewarm" (the fuzzy?) that He would spew them out of His mouth (Rev. 3:16). That sounds worse than a slap in the face from dear old mom!

We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW, a robustly orthodox Catholic monthly magazine, aren't afraid to offend people, and we give our readers the story straight. If you think we're exaggerating, consider the fact that *OSV* and all its sister periodicals — and other feel-good publications — have banned our trademark ads from their pages. Yes, we've got "attitude" (as Karl Keating says) and "cheek" (according to *Newsweek*). And we're unusually cheap (see below).

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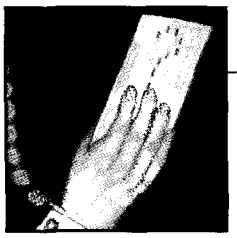

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On Misrepresented Monsters

I enjoyed reading George McCartney's review of *Monsters From the Id* in the November 2000 issue of *Chronicles* ("Frankenstein's Children," *Opinions*). However, it contains some misrepresentations of what I had to say on the relationship between sex and horror. To begin with, the Ford Foundation never funded Alfred Kinsey's sex surveys; it is the Rockefeller Foundation that holds that dubious distinction.

In addition, I do not propose Andrea Dworkin's writings as models of sexual morality any more than I propose *Alien* as a model of sexual behavior. Dworkin's writings support my case, but not in the way Professor McCartney claims they do. They represent an instance of the revulsion to things sexual that the sexual liberation of the 1960's and early 70's caused. In this, her writings are in the same class as *Alien*—an inchoate reaction to the unfulfilled promises of the sexual 60's produced by a person who can't really follow the line of moral causality back to its source. Like *Alien*, Andrea Dworkin's writings are the sequel to *Deep Throat*, an indication that oral sex is no longer fun. In fact, the whole project of sexual liberation had become something horrific by the late 70's, even though no one could admit it openly. The only way the culture could face this fact was through the medium of horror fictions, which allowed those who produce and consume them to say simultaneously that sexual liberation is good *and* that they were hurt badly by it. That is less painful than following the chain of moral causality to its inescapable conclusion by admitting that "what I did was wrong."

This brings us to the idea of intention. Professor McCartney seems to think that writers' intentions have hegemony over the texts that they produce. If this is the case, he needs to explain why Hollywood, which has been the leading promoter of sexual liberation since at least 1960, would produce films such as *Halloween*, which subvert their intentions by consistently portraying sexual misbehavior as being subject to the most brutal retribution and punishment. The only teenage girl who makes it out of *Halloween* alive is the one who refuses to have sex. This is so because a writer's intentions are constantly subverted by larger things—including his imperious desires and the moral law written on his heart. This is not to deny intentions; it is only to say that intentions are not the final word. As St. Augustine once said, "Even those who set themselves up against you, do but copy you in a perverse way." Reality—in this case, moral reality—has a way of subverting intention: That is precisely what the horror genre is about. Its fictions are created by people who espouse Enlightenment morals and, at the same time, know that they and others they know have been hurt by them. In this regard, the concept of divorce in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is much more uncanny than Professor McCartney would have us believe. It is nowhere associated with independence (as he claims). In fact, it is never explained. It is associated with monsters by mere temporal juxtaposition, the favored form of causality in horror fictions. As soon as Miles Bennell finds himself within sexual striking distance of Becky, pods appear to interrupt his desires.

As for my own views, Professor McCartney does his readers a disservice by understating them. I believe not only that to be morally licit all sexual activity must be confined to the marital bed, but that marital sexual intercourse—in order to be moral—must be open to procreation. What this has to do with "holding hands" escapes me. Just who is the puritan here? The man who defends the moral order, or the man who confuses the moral order by putting courtship rituals on the same level with adultery?

The real issue, however, is not what I believe, but what horror writers from the author of *The Bacchae* to the author of *Halloween* think, and here the testimony is all but unanimous. If a teenage girl removes one article of clothing, a monster will leap out of the bushes and stab her to death. If a couple is found making out in an automobile, the Blob will not only kill them but destroy the entire city. If the women leave their looms to worship the Asiatic god Dionysos on the mountainside, the city is faced with destruction. If the king goes to watch the women dancing naked on the mountainside, he will end up being torn limb from limb. All of these fictions describe what Professor

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McCartney would call "dire consequences." All of them indicate that sexual immorality—especially in women—is a threat to the social order. All of them indicate that sex disconnected from morals leads to horror. Taken together, these fictions embody the sexual moral patrimony of the West. A culture superior to our own might have learned these lessons the easy way, by reading these texts with respect. Our culture, however, decided to learn these lessons in what Ben Franklin called the "expensive school of experience." What horror fictions make clear is that that lesson will be learned willy-nilly. The monsters that our dissolute behavior creates will ensure that.

—F. Michael Jones
South Bend, IN

Dr. McCartney Replies:

First, let me say—as I did in my review—that I agree with Dr. Jones' central thesis: The modern attempt to regard sex as a form of value-free recreation disconnected from its procreative potential has been widely destructive.

If anthropology is at all correct in its assumptions, what we call "civilization" received one of its most formative revelations when our species began to realize that there was a causal connection between a woman's birth pangs and the pleasurable frenzy that preceded them by nine months. At that moment, sex became at once sacred and fateful, an activity that required special handling. That people have in recent times been so desperate to break this procreative linkage is, as Dr. Jones argues, horrifically ironic. In full possession of the facts of life, many have chosen to abandon them in hopes of enjoying unfettered pleasure. The results—broken homes, abandoned children, abused women, venereal diseases—have been catastrophic.

So far, so agreed. I must, however, take issue with Dr. Jones' proposed remedy. Although sex is liable to be misused, limiting its expression to a purely procreative functionalism won't work. As a Roman Catholic, I am, of course, familiar with this prescription. But I've always thought it a cure worse than the disease, and so have many within the Church. Do we eat only to nourish ourselves? Drink only to quench thirst? Clothe ourselves only to keep warm? Our basic needs and appetites have given rise to an infinite panoply of aesthetic expressiveness. That's what we call "culture." If we were to follow Dr. Jones' declared regimen regarding sex, then we would have to dump the *Odyssey*, Dante, the sonnet, and Cole Porter—to say nothing of handholding, which, I believe, can be quite stimulating without being necessarily adulterous or even fornicative. Dr. Jones sometimes seems to want to corral us into Swift's Houyhnhnm herd, rationally proscribing our appetites to their purely utilitarian applications.

Following Dr. Jones' readiness to dismiss authorial intentions, I could willfully interpret his own writing. Does he not show signs of siding with the pod people in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, especially the one who righteously justifies their collectivist mission to convert humanity to their cause? As this well-meaning alien explains to the film's human principals, Becky and Miles, they should be glad to join a world without emotion, love, and individuality because it is infinitely more reasonable than the one they know. Unquestionably; but it would be inhumanly dull, also. I'm sure Dr. Jones doesn't deliberately intend to adopt the pod position, so I won't say that he does on some subconscious level.

On Andrea Dworkin, I reread Dr. Jones' remarks in *Monsters From the Id*, and there is nothing there to suggest he recognizes her obsessive lunacy for what it is.

Finally, I must thank Dr. Jones for correcting my mistake regarding the foundation that supported Alfred Kinsey, a pod person of a different—but just as alien—stripe. Discredit must be given where discredit is due. Dr. Jones may be amused to learn of the circumstances that extenuate my otherwise unpardonable mistake. I was writing my review while visiting my daughter and son-in-law in Seattle. Ensconced in their cramped back bedroom, I found myself occasionally distracted by the joyful consequences of libido in the person of my clamorous month-old granddaughter, Flannery.

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

AL GORE's exit to political oblivion has no doubt delighted many conservatives. But there is nothing for conservatives to cheer about in the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Bush* v. *Gore*, the instrument of Gore's demise.

The unsigned majority opinion concluded that Florida's recount procedures violated the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, because no uniform standard was used in the recount ordered by the Florida Supreme Court to determine what constituted a valid vote. This conclusion was somewhat surprising because Florida's election statutes, like those of most other states, merely charge those counting the votes to determine the "intent of the voter." In other words, the U.S. Supreme Court found fault with Florida's Supreme Court not because it had vitiated Florida's statutory election scheme, but because the Florida court had not made up a new standard for counting votes to go along with its other misreadings of the legislature's intent.

The U.S. Supreme Court's attempt to ensure the "equality" of all votes is sure to invite further federal intervention in state elections. One can easily envision, for example, a black candidate challenging his defeat in federal court on the grounds that poorer minority districts often use older voting machines that produce more spoiled ballots. The majority inserted some language to try to guard against such challenges, but the logic of *Bush* v. *Gore* surely favors them. In seeking to justify its decision, the majority placed almost total reliance on *Reynolds* v. *Sims* and other examples of what it now terms the Warren Court's "one person, one vote jurisprudence." Those decisions ignored the text, history, and structure of the Constitution and dealt a grievous blow to conservative politics in America; they are hardly building blocks for a truly conservative jurisprudence.

Nor was the opinion of Chief Justice Rehnquist, joined by Justices Scalia and Thomas, particularly heartening. The Court's conservative bloc also relied on Warren Court jurisprudence to justify their willingness to overturn the Florida Supreme Court's interpretation of Florida law.

Having invoked the shade of Earl Warren, the conservative trio also claimed to be vindicating the Florida legislature and federalism. But surely the cause of federalism would have been better served if

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the Florida legislature had vindicated its own rights by appointing the slate of electors that had been chosen according to the statutory scheme created by the legislature. It is true that this route may have produced two slates of electors from Florida, but that is not a constitutional problem. If Florida's legislature had certified one set of electors and Florida's Supreme Court had tried to certify another, Congress—as the Constitution provides—would have resolved the dispute and almost certainly would have agreed with the Florida legislature. This result would have strengthened the cause of federalism, reaffirming The Framers' view that political decisions should be made by the political branches, and proving that a state legislature can still defend itself from the local arm of the imperial judiciary. Instead, *Bush* v. *Gore* demonstrates that, in contemporary America, all issues are to be resolved by the judiciary—particularly the federal judiciary.

If there is one reason to be encouraged by this decision, it is all the hypocritical, liberal posturing about judicial activism. The day before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled, the *New York Times* devoted practically its entire editorial page to phony worries about judicial activism, including its own plea that the justices issue a decision that "preserves respect for Supreme Court justices as referees who are able to rise above their political loyalties." Justice Breyer raised similar concerns in his dissent, piously chastising the majority for running "the risk of undermining the public's confidence in the Court itself."

Not that the *New York Times* and Justice Breyer have rejected past cheerleading for *Roe* v. *Wade* and the like, suddenly discovering the virtues of federalism and judicial restraint. They recognize that no institution has done more to advance the leftist agenda in the last 40 years than activist courts, and an indispensable element of this strategy has been the public's willingness to treat the latest pronouncement of the Supreme Court as the equivalent of tablets being brought down from Sinai. If Americans do begin to take a more critical look at the Supreme Court, that will be far more beneficial to conservatism than the thin gruel the second Bush administration is likely to serve up.

—*Thomas Piatak*

How did Al Gore blow it?

He had everything going for him. He was the heir to one of the most successful administrations in American history. The length and extent of our prosperity were unprecedented. Our position in the world had never been higher. All agreed, with polls to back them up, that if the Constitution had permitted Bill Clinton to run again, he would have won in a landslide. Why didn't Gore inherit this goodwill? Why wasn't he a shoo-in?

All he had to do, it seemed, was disassociate himself from Clinton's disgusting sexual exploits and the lies and prevarications that went with them. This he did beautifully by seldom mentioning Clinton, by emphasizing his own "family values," and by finding himself a running mate who was probity incarnate. But it didn't work. Why?

Through the worst of the Clinton sexual scandals, his public support never wavered. The Republican majority in Congress—in their shock, horror, and glee—couldn't believe that the support would continue "once the facts were known." Finally, they had to give up the whole project in the face of clearly hostile public opinion; when it was all over,

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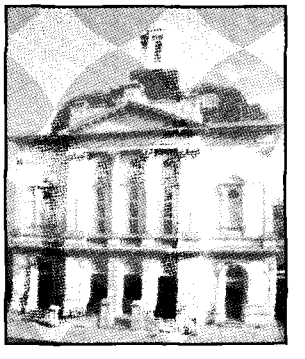

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a poll was taken which revealed that *two thirds* of the American public approved of Clinton's performance in office, *sexual games and all*. Oh, yes, some people said (showing more sophistication than the pundits), they might not want Clinton going out with their daughters; but that had nothing to do with the presidency.

Never before has there been such a gap between political wisdom in the higher echelons of American government and the actual preferences of American voters. How did it happen? Why couldn't the experts believe in the clear testimony of the polls? I suspect the answer lies in the nature of human belief. To believe a fact, you need more than just the fact, plain and simple: You need an explanation for it. The fact has to fit the beliefs of the person who accepts it. I once developed the habit, in all seasons, of walking barefoot around the polite suburb where I live. The only person ever to notice was a visitor from India. In India, adults walk barefoot; in America, they don't. So when you walk barefoot in America, no one expects to see it, so no one does.

Maybe the experts couldn't believe what was in front of their noses because they didn't have the right beliefs about the American presidency. Something about the office and its relationship to the electorate today escaped them. Sexual exploits. Kings and their mistresses. An American president is a kind of monarch, isn't he? The further back you go in history, the clearer the pattern becomes. At Julius Caesar's official triumphs, his soldiers put on obscene skits, celebrating his sexual exploits (with both sexes). That was no shame; it was part of his power and glory—because, like the Fisher King in the notes to T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, he was a fertility symbol. The king's potency is a magical guarantee of the nation's.

That's how Clinton—that poor Mr. Prettyboy from the backwoods of Arkansas—outfoxed everybody, probably without even realizing it himself. He had become a fertility symbol. I remember a working-class gent from Virginia saying, at the height of the scandal, that he was going to church that Sunday to pray for Bill Clinton's soul. I don't think I have ever heard heavier, more delicious irony. The man hadn't been near a church—certainly not in spirit—for years. It was his way of commenting on what he viewed as the hypocrisy of churches and their ministers and supporters: all those pious souls who are embezzling church funds, doing it with choirboys, getting it on with their secretaries . . .

And Gore, raised (unlike Clinton) among the elite, fell for the phony piety (or, at least, supposed that the stupid voters would), heeded the political wisdom of his class, and placed himself firmly among the solemn hypocrites. Half the electorate preferred—perhaps with good reason—an ignorant, spoiled wastrel of demonstrated incompetence. If Gore's advisors and spin doctors had told him to shout from the rooftops what a great guy Clinton was, if they had found ways for Gore subtly to imply that Clinton's successes with the economy and with the nations of the world were a perfect reflection of his success with Monica Lewinsky, if they had told him to keep kissing Tipper and to throw away that little pad he scribbled on during debates and to quit boring everyone to death with endless talk about the drab little issues we have nowadays—then I think our savvy electorate would have produced a less confused result.

—*Richard Moore*

GEORGE W. BUSH, as President of the United States, can be counted on in the first six months to . . . well, I should be honest here (with hand on heart). I don't think any of us can say with much precision what my governor will accomplish in the new office whose door he finally squeaked through. But don't drop the family crystal when I say, with all respect to those of another mind on this question, that he may favorably surprise some arch-skeptics.

As a Republican party chief and state governor, George W. disappointed with some regularity a lot of us fossilized conservatives who wouldn't have minded had he proposed dismantling our photogenic capitol brick by brick and sowing the site with salt. He *kind of* did a good job here—in any case a far better job than Ann Richards had in the preceding four years. He failed to shrink government, but he voiced Christian moral convictions without guile, didn't shrink from application of the death penalty, tried to raise educational standards, and, not least, presented for the general delectation a family nice as all get-out. He set a good gubernatorial tone—a charge no conservative ever leveled at Richards.

I like and respect the governor, and if this quirky preference inspires readers to whoop up a lynch party in my honor, be it even so. I know some good hidey-holes.

In this life, I have concluded after well-nigh six decades, you do the best you can. The best America was able to do in the year 2000 was George W. Bush. That is why he is our President, and I am content with the prospect.

It is a matter of expectations. A cat won't bark; a fish won't run the 400-meter relay. We need not expect George W. Bush, a moderately conservative President, to reenact the Reagan presidency—to the extent that would please the more hard-line brethren. And given the narrowness of Bush's victory, we should expect little ideological vigor. I, for one, don't propose to spend the next four years grousing that American voters didn't choose the American Maggie Thatcher—whoever that may be.

As he did in Texas, Bush will upgrade the tone and atmosphere in Washington. How could it be otherwise? After Bill and Hillary Clinton, President Robert Downey, Jr., would make the Oval Office smell like sachet and spring wildflowers. It may take time for the difference to sink in on many Americans, but sink in it must. Bush is a good person. No cigars, no Lincoln Bedroom stayovers, no FBI files or travel-office fiascoes. No Janet Renos.

Will Bush stock his administration with reliable Tories? Of course not. Reagan didn't either, save at the Department of Justice and other select venues; but Reagan, unlike Bush, enjoyed a kind of mandate. Is the point not obvious, even so? Under Bush, no Lani Guiniers, no Donna Shalalas, no Warren Christophers, no Larry Tribes on the federal bench (or promotions from the Florida Supreme Court).

Maybe we don't know in detail what the Bush-Cheney administration will actually do, but we can be quite certain what it won't do: veto tax cuts and bans on partial-birth abortion, kowtow to feminists and the gay-rights lobby, starve the military of needed funds, scorn private-sector approaches to problems such as Social Security.

Some readers of this magazine will take umbrage at Bush's amenability to fairly high levels of immigration. They might reflect that he isn't really a throw-wide-the-gates type and that Hispanic voters will decide whether somewhat conservative Republicans or relentlessly left-liberal Democrats govern the United States for some time to come. The black

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vote seems permanently lost to the Democrats. As an immigration centrist (about the only issue on which I'm centrist), I'm willing to sit back and see if Bush—who got 30 percent of the Hispanic vote versus five percent of the black vote—can do some coalition-building. I think he will try.

So bring on the lynch party. I think we have, in our new President, a pretty good guy who will be for us far more often than he will be against us. And won't that be a bracing change? As we say in Texas, whoooo-eeee!

—*William Murchison*

THE U.S. SUPREME COURT has put an end to five weeks of uncertainty. In the early days of December, in the twilight between the certification of George W. Bush as the winner of Florida's electoral votes and the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court that the Florida Supreme Court was wrong to intervene, only one thing was certain: No respectable constitutional-law scholar had a clue what was likely to happen. Most professed to be baffled that the U.S. Supreme Court would agree to involve itself in a controversy over Florida election law, and some argued that the Republicans (those alleged proponents of states' rights) were rank hypocrites to run to the federal courts for protection from the Florida courts.

The Bush forces claimed that they were not defending the superiority of federal over state authority, but the rule of law over both. For the governor of Texas, the rule of law meant that federal and Florida guidelines promulgated before the election were the only ones that could be used in deciding the election. These guidelines included the deadline specified by statute for recounts and the discretion of the Florida secretary of state to disallow the results of hand recounts turned in after the deadline, absent fraud, machine failure, or acts of God—none of which anyone claimed occurred in the three counties the Democrats wanted recounted. Vice President Gore and the Florida Supreme Court (all of whose members were appointed by Democratic Florida governors) also claimed to be promoting the rule of law; but in their vision, the Florida constitution defers to the will of the people expressed in their individual votes. Holding up a ballot to the light to reveal a dimple or a minute separation in the binding of a chad was a bit like Harry Blackmun finding penumbras and emanations in the Bill of Rights which guaranteed the right to an abortion. For the Democrats, implementing the rule of law meant unleashing trial lawyers to manipulate legal rules.

The U.S. Supreme Court, then, had to choose between these two visions. For the first time in history, an audiotape of the arguments before the Court was released within minutes of the conclusion of the argument and broadcast to the nation. The passions of Democratic and Republican partisans were high, but the Court was an intriguing island of civility, with formal personal address and only mild jesting between the justices and the lawyers. The justices' questions—not always a reliable indicator—made it clear that four of them (Rehnquist, Scalia, O'Connor, and Kennedy) believed that the Florida Supreme Court was about the business of making—rather than interpreting—law and had wrongly ignored the rules specified by the Florida legislature, the U.S. Constitution, and a federal statute. Four others (Stevens, Souter, Breyer, and Ginsburg) seemed to suggest that this was a matter for Floridians, not the federal courts. That these four—anything but champions of state sovereignty—were prepared to uphold the Florida judges against the Florida legislature and the federal courts was an irony lost on no one. To the puzzlement of all and the consternation of many, Justice Breyer even suggested to a Gore lawyer that "we win" if "your side wins." Justice Thomas said nothing—per usual—but his previous opinions castigating judicial overreaching led most to believe that he would be part of a five-to-four majority upholding Bush's position that the Florida Supreme Court went too far.

The opinion of the pundits was that the Court took the case to give a boost to Bush. Still, since the Florida secretary of state's declaration that Bush was the winner (following the original vote, machine recount, and hand recounts in three heavily Democratic counties, one of which was aborted when it could not make the deadline) gave legitimacy to the governor's quest for the presidency, the Court had the option of declaring the case moot and bowing out, hoping that the Florida recounts would not change the result. The Court was in a pickle: Its legitimacy depends on being able to claim it is apolitical, and a split decision favoring Bush could be painted as anything but. The Court speaks with greatest force when it is unanimous, but the only way to achieve unanimity would have been to dismiss Bush's appeal as moot, which could have been spun by the Gore forces as a great triumph for their man, possibly defeating the purpose for which the Court agreed to hear the case in the first place. If the Court punted, it would be a blow to the rule of law; but if the Court did the right thing, upholding Bush's challenge, would its future ability to preserve the law be imperiled?

The Court surprised everyone by unanimously vacating the state court's decision and sending the case back to the Florida Supreme Court for clarification. Could the Florida Supreme Court really have meant that the Florida constitution's comments regarding voter intent trumped a federal law mandating a firm deadline for the selection of electors? Wouldn't that be changing the rules in mid-game, in violation of federal law? The U.S. Supreme Court was gently suggesting that Florida's highest court back off. A Florida trial court, perhaps reading between the lines, held that the recounts the Gore camp wanted were impermissible under Florida law. Then, in the penultimate act, the Florida Supreme Court, blithely ignoring the request for clarification from the U.S. Supreme Court, reversed the Florida trial court in a four-to-three decision, ordered the recounts to continue, and created jubilation in the Gore camp. The chief justice of the Florida Supreme Court predicted that the U.S. Supreme Court would never permit the Florida decision to stand; the next day, the U.S. Supreme Court, by a vote of five to four, stayed the Florida Supreme Court's order, stopping the recount. Two days later, there was another U.S. Supreme Court argument and another audiotape. On the third day, in another five-to-four ruling—although seven justices agreed that the manner in which the recount had been conducted was unconstitutional—the Court issued a final order, permanently stopping the recount. The opinion was a masterpiece of obfuscation; but when the smoke cleared, Vice President Gore understood that the majority had terminated his insurgency. On the fourth day, in the best speech he ever delivered, Gore conceded.

No one could have predicted it, but George W. Bush owes his presidency to five justices on the U.S. Supreme Court. This only happened, of course, because Vice President Gore—for the first time in memory—litigated a presidential election, and he who lives by the sword dies

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by the sword. We might also speculate whether it was wise to attack Justices Scalia and Thomas, as Al Gore did during his campaign. No matter. Those of us who still believe in the rule of law could rejoice that seven of the nine justices of the U.S. Supreme Court had the courage to say the right thing, and five had the courage to do it.

—*Stephen B. Presser*

CANADIAN ALLIANCE leader Stockwell Day, I asserted a few months ago in *Chronicles* ("Taking Stock," *Views*, November 2000), would "seek to persuade Middle Canadian voters that the [governing] Liberals are their enemies, not their friends." I also argued that he didn't "play by his enemies' rules," and that his party was "a viable alternative to Liberal (and liberal) hegemony." I even compared Day to Ronald Reagan. In the words of Johnny Rotten, "Ever get the feeling you've been cheated?"

Canadians voted on November 27, and Prime Minister Jean Chrétien won his third consecutive majority government. The Liberals took 172 seats (up from 155); the Alliance, 66 (up from 60); the separatist Bloc Quebecois, 38 (down from 44); the socialist New Democratic Party, 13 (down from 21); and the otiose Progressive Conservatives, 13 (down from 20).

Repeating the failures of its predecessor (the Reform Party), the Alliance took only two seats in Ontario; the Liberals took 100 (out of 103). This was particularly bitter for the Alliance, as Day had spent as much time in Ontario as in all the other nine provinces combined. Even more galling, the Alliance failed to finish off the Conservatives, who differ from the Liberals only in the sense that arsenic differs from cyanide. The Conservatives retained official-party status; leader (and former prime minister) Joe Clark, completing his transformation from hapless Boy Scout to the troll beneath the bridge of Canadian politics, was elected in the Alliance heartland of Calgary.

Once again, Canada split from east to west. The Alliance won 64 of its seats in the four Western provinces and almost swept Alberta and British Columbia. The consensus is that Ontarians were repelled by a "scary," "divisive," and "extreme" social conservatism from the hinterland. Rubbish. Day ran an almost issue-free campaign. The same man who declared that "the era of political correctness is over" ran headlong from his own policies in a futile attempt to persuade Canadians that he represented no threat to liberal hegemony. He gutted the Alliance's single-tax plan and was unable to deliver a single philosophical or moral justification for an end to tax robbery. Day swore he would outdo the Liberals in buttressing Canada's collapsing medicare system. He became almost hysterically incoherent when presented with the details of his party's direct-democracy plan.

Day is a Pentecostal Christian, and he has been accused routinely of desiring to "impose" his religious beliefs on the nation. Never mind that the Liberals have imposed their atheist immorality on Canada for over three decades. The same man who, earlier in the year, had quoted Hilaire Belloc and decried the "naked public square" turned yellow. He pandered to every ethnic group he could find: Chinese, Sikhs, Muslims, Greeks, Armenians. He hinted that he would increase immigration—even though Canada already takes in more immigrants *per capita* than any other country in the world. He practically promised to make Israel the 11th province.

His pandering only upped the multiculturalists' ransom demands. Liberal minister Elinor Caplan said that Alliance supporters were "Holocaust deniers, prominent bigots and racists." Liberal minister Hedy Fry said that Day's belief that "Jesus Christ is the God of the whole universe" is "an insult to every Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, everybody else who believes in other religions." Chrétien was more oblique, conjuring visions of Europe laid waste by the Nazis and concluding that the Alliance appealed to the "dark side."

Chrétien and Clark lied repeatedly about the Alliance platform, but Day, adopting the same holier-than-thou attitude that crippled Reform leader Preston Manning, could only whine. He begged Chrétien to "call off your dogs" and commended his "agenda of respect" to the prime minister—his pre-election decision to campaign with one hand tied behind his back.

Day refused to be drawn on abortion, which became a campaign issue for the first time ever. Despite his pro-life views, he remained silent after Chrétien and Clark, both nominally Roman Catholic, alleged that Catholic teaching was uncertain on the subject. Day remained silent even after Chrétien hinted (at a Catholic high school, no less!) that abortion was not a problem for him, as he was too old to force his wife to have one.

In the end, Day was left with nothing to sell but the cult of his (as it turned out) shallow and not especially interesting personality. Ronald Reagan? More like Reagan without the brains.

How bad is the state of the Canadian right? Bad enough that Canadian conservatives look longingly at George W. Bush as a paragon of principled conviction.

—*Kevin Michael Grace*

OBITER DICTA: The caption below the photograph on p. 23 of the December 2000 issue is incorrect. It should read, "A statue of St. Paul erected by Blessed Pope Pius IX in front of St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City." Our thanks to the many readers, including **E. Christian Kopff** and **Paul Check**, who called this error to our attention.

Our poet this month is **Bradley R. Strahan**, who teaches poetry at Georgetown University. The publisher of *Visions-International*, Mr. Strahan has had over 500 poems published in such journals as *America*, *Christian Century*, *Cross Currents*, the *Seattle Review*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, *First Things*, and the *Hollins Critic*. His latest book, *The Conjurer's Gallery* was released last year by Crosscultural Communications.

Chronicles is illustrated this month by **Stephen Warde Anderson**, a self-taught artist from Rockford, Illinois. Mr. Anderson is affiliated with the Phyllis Kind Gallery in New York, Dean Jensen Gallery in Milwaukee, Aron Packer and Earth Works Gallery in Chicago, and Webb Gallery in Waxahachie, Texas.

BOOK OF NEXT MONTH

Our book for next month is *Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith* by Librarian of Congress James H. Billington. A scholarly examination of the intellectual and social force behind modern revolutions, the book proves that just because you're paranoid, it doesn't mean that *they* aren't out to get you.

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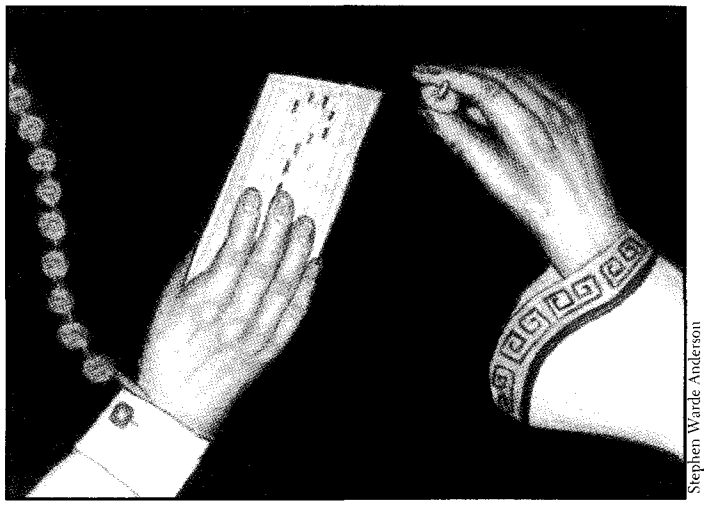
Stephen Warde Anderson

Free Greeks, Servile Americans

by Thomas Fleming

Conservatives are fond of saying that the United States is a republic, not a democracy, and in their appeals to the national conscience, they invoke the sacred language of republican tradition, citing scriptures from Aristotle and Cicero, from Edmund Burke and George Washington: the rule of law, a virtuous citizenry, and ordered liberty. Like most Americans, however, conservatives prefer not to look too far beneath the Olympian language down to where politics is practiced not by an assembly of demigods so much as by the termites eating the timbers under the parquet floor.

Although the Greeks, who bequeathed to us the language and the institutions of republican government, were among the most accomplished liars in the history of the world, they were also capable of astonishing frankness about the nature of politics and the moral frailty of human beings.

The brutal candor of Homer and Hesiod, to take only two writers at the beginning of the Greek literary tradition, is matched (in my limited reading) only by the best of Icelandic writing. I remember the shock experienced by some of my fellow students in a seminar on early Greek poetry when, in the midst of a discussion of Solon's magisterial and dignified poetry on his political reforms, we were confronted with the evidence of his pederastic verse. The professor (Douglas Young), looking alternatively merry and stern, observed that you always had to be on guard against the Greeks. They would, on occasion, talk about anything.

This alarming candor shocked many Romans, though it has given degenerate moderns an excuse for dipping into the bad recent translations of Greek literature. Greek writers could be particularly straightforward about the reality of power. Read Hesiod's attempts to justify the ways of gods to men, and you will come across the story of the nightingale crying out to the hawk that has captured her:

> Oh what a fool to cry of right and wrong,
> A weakling in the clutches of the strong . . .

The moral, that only fools struggle with those who are stronger, is something that goes against the Horatio Alger grain of the American character.

The historian Thucydides is often overinterpreted as a precursor of Machiavelli, though it seems more likely that, in describing the rise and fall of the Athenian democracy, he was simply a pious and patriotic citizen trying to tell the truth about the age through which he had lived. His description of the argument between the Athenians and the people of Melos (to whom Athens had given the choice: Desert the Spartans and join us—or die) is the sort of narrative that no prominent American could write in connection with, say, Madeleine Albright at Rambouillet or Harry Truman about to obliterate Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Americans are among the most churchgoing people in the world, but when they go to work or enter a polling place, they check their Christianity at the door. If we are sincere in our worship of any deity, it is the service we pay to Mammon, from whom we expect to receive our daily 500 bucks. But even our worship of money is sugared over with platitudes about higher things.

The Greeks, by contrast, were very straightforward and regarded money as, on the whole, an unmixed blessing. With money, you can pursue your passion for power and sex—for anything you want. "To be wealthy," sang honest Pindar in an ode celebrating a rich patron, "when fate brings wisdom with it, is the best thing there is." Though many aristocrats complained

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that money wasn't everything ("Wealth, wealth makes the man," as one cynical proverb went), none of them would pretend to rise above all such material questions.

Even Aristotle, who regarded the life of contemplation as the culmination of human existence, was very clear about the need for a certain level of wealth and comfort. But we, whose entire culture for two centuries (at least) has been devoted to getting and spending, tell ourselves that the great billionaires are really only in it for the game, that money can't buy happiness. (Tell that to the non-English-speaking immigrant who makes minimum wage for mixing up your order at McDonald's.)

Wealth is so important to Americans that we skip the usual Greek provisos about wisdom and justice. Rock stars who cannot play their instruments, athaletes who jump like kangaroos, stock-market swindlers who batten on insider trading then set up foundations for business ethics, and the parasites who build and run casinos to keep the suckers from wasting their money on their children's education—these are the heroes of American life.

Even Christian ministers are esteemed in proportion as they build media empires or fundraising dodges, and I am not just speaking of evangelical charlatans like the Bakkers and Swaggarts. I shall never forget the time I attended an Episcopalian diocesan convention and heard our bishop, the Rt. Rev. Gray Temple (a name obviously invented by Trollope) praised to the skies, not for ministering to Christian souls, but as the CEO of a corporation with so many millions in property assets, a budget of such-and-such. Considering what the Episcopal Church has become, perhaps it is better to concentrate on the only real assets the "church" has left.

Churches do not pay taxes, presumably because they are saddled with the "death" half of the "death and taxes" equation. The rest of us, however, do pay taxes until we die (and afterward, so long as the Democrats have their way), and though we complain, we rarely are candid about the American tax structure. For example, we usually like to compare ourselves with the overtaxed Europeans, but our calculations rarely take into account what we have to pay out in state income taxes, property taxes, Social Security, etc. We also pretend that we are getting something for our money, but nothing is plainer than the fact that the more money our government devotes to some noble end—say, education—the worse the result.

We refer to the fatal certainty of taxes as if it has ever been thus, but it has not. Republican peoples have traditionally paid little or no direct taxes. Classical Greeks and republican Romans (like Americans before 1913) paid various kinds of duties and taxes—on goods brought into a harbor, on manumitted slaves, on public land rented for farming or used for pasturing sheep—but anything like a capitation or revenue tax was viewed as an emergency measure that might be, in theory at least, paid back to the citizens. After the conquest of Macedonia, the Roman republic had enough money to terminate even the (probably) one percent *tributum* levied on property value for support of the army.

In the heyday of the Greek city-states, citizens did not expect to pay taxes. "Greek democracies," observes Alfred Zimmern in a once-famous book,

> always shrunk, unless they were driven to it by necessity, from direct taxation. It was regarded as derogatory to the dignity of a free citizen. Resident aliens and freedmen might pay a poll-tax (i.e., a tax per individual or on his income) and be thankful for the privilege; but the citizen must be left free to help the city in his own way. Every kind of indirect tax he was indeed willing to pay, taxes in time as well as in money; but the only direct contribution he made as a citizen to the State's resources he made as a free gift.

At Athens, the rich undertook (mostly voluntarily) to subsidize the production of the tragedies put on in the festivals and to outfit ships of war, and the poorer citizens could, during the agricultural off-season, perform labor building walls and temples. What imposts and duties there were (apart from taxes collected by the neighborhoods or "demes") had to be collected by tax farmers, whose profession has been held in universal abhorrence, as Prof. Ernst Badian points out in *Publicans and Sinners*, by the same people who "are likely to be shocked that (say) the telegraph service or the water supply, in another society, should be in private hands."

The Athenians did collect taxes, of course, but from the cities which were gradually converted from ship-contributing allies to tribute-paying subjects. Pericles used some of the money to beautify the Acropolis, whose temples the Persians had burnt when the people of Athens (almost alone among the Greek maritime powers) deserted their city and faced the polyglot imperial force in the straits of Salamis. Athens behaved abominably toward her "allies"—that is beyond dispute—but their tribute was, in one sense, a small price to pay for the sacrifices she continued to make on behalf of Greek liberties.

The point is worth repeating: Free people do not pay taxes; subjects do. Free people do pay duties; they may put some of

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Mata Hari's Ghost

by B.R. Strahan

What light there is
falls unnoticed
on our cast off dreams,

photon by photon
erasing our faces
from the dark marquees.

Each dance becomes
another death, each song
a requiem in stone.

Bone hand rubs against bone
until their obscene
gestures turn to dust.

Drained of lust
the players float
weightless 'cross the stage;

their rage more real
than all our dead desires
and the light we've lost.

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their time and resources to the service of their commonwealth; and in times of national emergency, they will even submit to a tax to support the soldiers who are risking their lives for their neighbors. Free people, however, reject categorically the assumption that they somehow owe the state a portion of their income or property.

Claude Nicolet, in his book on Roman citizenship, distinguishes sharply between the combination of indirect taxation and voluntary contributions that characterized ancient commonwealths and the concept of taxation as something citizens owe government, which "was only known to the ancients in the context of provincial finances, i.e., in respect of conquered peoples who, in return for their freedom and an assurance of protection, were obliged to make a 'monetary payment' in recognition of Roman sovereignty."

So here is the difference between us (Americans and Europeans) and them (ancient Greek and Roman citizens): They were free, and they knew it. We are not free and refuse to recognize the fact. Roman citizens were eventually subject to direct taxation, and the great bureaucrat Diocletian, in addition to drawing up a doomed-to-fail program of wage-and-price controls, devised a universal system of taxation throughout the empire. No one would pretend that the subjects of Diocletian or Constantine were a free republican people. The emperors of the fourth and fifth centuries made no pretense: In political rituals and court ceremonies, even Christian emperors were treated as gods.

Greeks and Romans of the later empire did retain a large measure of moral freedom, and dedicated public servants of broad education and generous minds continued to be produced. Even 500 years after the fall of Rome, when our barbarian ancestors were yahooing through the ruins of a fallen civilization, some traditions of the rule of law and decent behavior were being preserved in the New Rome that Constantine had built on the Bosporus. But—and this is something we must never let ourselves forget—in losing their political liberties and subjecting themselves to imperial taxation, they gradually lost their cultural and even their economic initiative and creativity.

Greek and Roman civic ideals were not dead; they would be revived by Italians in the Middle Ages and transmitted to their buffoonish cousins in England, France, and Germany; and these ideals of liberty and the rule of law would take on new life in the woods and prairies of North America. But in the end, the Old Adam of dependence and servility reasserted itself everywhere, especially among the nation that most vaunted itself on its liberty. The transformation is summed up in a small change of language. Once upon a time, Americans were proud to declare—in terms St. Paul would have understood—that they were citizens of this great republic, but by the time I was growing up, disgruntled Americans writing letters to the editor would inevitably begin their diatribes with "As a taxpayer . . ." It is almost as if they are proud of their servility.

Taxation without representation is tyranny, declared James Otis, but what representation is possible in a political system where the votes of an ignorant and subrational proletariat (some of them with incomes in six figures) are controlled by party machines, international lobbyists, and media conglomerates? The answer is: *None*. These are bitter lessons that the Greeks can teach us best. Small wonder that ancient writers, with their disturbing candor, are being chased out of universities to make room for the servile voices of the imperial chorus. c

DICTATIONS

The Moral Minority

The word "minority" represents one of those inversions of value that typify socialist regimes. Derived, obviously, from the Latin *minor* (smaller or less in respect of size, importance, age, etc.), "minority" has been used in English to express both the immature years before adulthood and the losing side of a judicial opinion. Most significantly, it means—according to the Oxford English Dictionary—the "condition of being smaller, inferior, subordinate."

Presumably, then, when we describe an individual as belonging to a minority, we are saying that we regard him as a loser, an inferior, a subordinate. The idea of a virtuous minority is romantic and whiggish. "Minorities are almost always in the right," remarked the Rev. Sidney Smith, a professional contrarian, who almost always found himself on the side of the smug progressives at the *Edinburgh Review*. The political (and moral) minority celebrated by Sidney Smith would evolve over the years into the liberals, socialists, progressives, and leftists who are pretty much responsible for the shape the world is in today.

That minorities are special and privileged became a matter of cant. "Governments exist to protect the rights of minorities," brayed Wendell Phillips in a speech given in Boston in 1860, only a year before his friends and followers plunged the nation into a war to destroy the political rights of the minority of American citizens living in the Southern states. Phillips condemned Lincoln for being too moderate and insisted that the African minority had to be given land, education, and privileges at the expense of the immoral majority. After over a hundred years of playing this same game, the American political class has brought the nation to the brink of a race war without substantially advancing the interests of its African-American subjects, who are incarcerated, robbed, murdered, and addicted to drugs at rates which the people of 1860 or 1960 would have found incredible.

Blacks constitute a "minority" (in round numbers, about 15 percent of the population); so do Hispanics (about ten percent), Asians (about five percent), homosexuals (less than five percent, but let's be generous), and women (about 50 percent). Have I left anyone out? Oh, yes, the straight, white, European males who created civilization, established the American constitutional order, and pay the bulk of the taxes. At less than 35 percent, they represent the "majority," because in a society where *right*—the term used formerly to express everything straight, true, correct, and favorable—is a term of political abuse, *majority* can only refer to the demonic oppressor. What will they do when the happy day predicted so exuberantly by Bill Clinton and the census boys arrives, when men and women of European extraction will be in the minority? I only hope they will be kind enough to find a tribal homeland for us somewhere out in Montana.

—Humpty Dumpty

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The Western Way of War

From Plato to NATO

by Roger D. McGrath

Stephen Warde Anderson

When I first began reading of the ancient world as a child, I was mystified by the collapse of the Greek city-states and the fall of Rome. How could such a thing come to pass? It seemed perfectly reasonable that Egypt, Sumer, and the Hittite kingdom should have come and gone, but not Periclean Athens or Caesar's Rome. Even today, when I occasionally teach an ancient-history class, I do not begin to identify with the peoples I am lecturing about until I get to Greece. Then, suddenly, I see Western man. Ever since I was old enough to read, to imagine, to long for adventure, I saw myself standing with Leonidas at Thermopylae or shoulder-to-shoulder with fellow hoplites at Marathon, fighting the Persians. I never saw myself standing with the Egyptians to repel the Hyksos invaders or locked in battle alongside my fellow Sumerians against the dreaded Amorites. My Greek heroes should not have followed the path of these other peoples. But they did. Their very success eventually caused them to become expansionist and imperialist, and their reach finally exceeded their grasp.

Despite the great contributions of the Egyptians and the Sumerians, for me it all begins with the Greeks. This is not as bold an assertion as it sounds, even in today's climate of multiculturalism and hypersensitivity. Try reading the quintessential example of early Mesopotamian literature, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. It is a strange tale—parts of which could be the product of a bad hallucination. I doubt many will identify with Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and Utnapishtim. Then pick up the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Instantly, you are transported back in time to the Peloponnese, to the Aegean, to Troy. We not only recognize Achilles, Patroclus, and Odysseus; we know them. Western man has arrived. So, too, have honor, courage, devotion, duty, loyalty, and justice. Not that these virtues were entirely absent from the cultures of earlier peoples; but they certainly were not the cynosure that they became among the Greeks.

The Greeks developed what has been called the Western way of war—a collision of soldiers on an open plain in a magnificent display of courage, skill, physical prowess, honor, and fair play, and a concomitant repugnance for decoy, ambush, sneak attacks, and the involvement of noncombatants. A battle is a test of brains and brawn and guts, but within parameters designed to emphasize honor and to protect the innocent. Said Alexander the Great when he was advised to launch a surprise night attack against the Persians: "The policy which you are suggesting is one of bandits and thieves, the only purpose of which is deception. I cannot allow my glory always to be diminished by Darius' absence, or by narrow terrain, or by tricks of night. I am resolved to attack openly and by daylight. I choose to regret my good fortune rather than be ashamed of my victory."

There was also no honor for the Greeks in fighting from afar. An archer or a javelin thrower who launched his weapon from a great distance was not held in high esteem, because he could kill with little risk to himself. Only those who clashed with sword or spear, defying death and disdaining retreat, were honorable.

The surrender of the surviving Spartans at Pylos during the Peloponnesian War says much about the Greek attitude. Under Demosthenes, the Athenians won a great victory, partly by the use of javelin throwers and archers who killed dozens of Spartans. One Spartan survivor said that arrows would be worth

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a great deal if they could pick out the brave men from the cowards. Without question, the indiscriminate manner of death from distant warriors left the Spartans bitter; this was not a fight of real men. Plutarch says that a battlefield death was of no concern to a Spartan unless "it was caused by a cowardly bow." In the *Iliad*, Diomedes says to Paris: "If you were to make trial of me in strong combat with weapons, your bow would do you no good at all nor your close-showered arrows." Strabo, a first-century A.D. geographer, records seeing an ancient inscribed pillar which forbade the use of arrows or missiles of any kind on the battlefield.

By the beginning of the seventh century B.C., the Greeks of the city-states had firmly established their manner of battle. By mutual agreement, heavily armed and slow-moving infantry, massed together in formation, sought battle on an open plain to determine victory or defeat in a few bloody hours. This meant that the hoplite class, the armored warrior, became all-important. This also meant that war would be conducted mostly by the middle class, not by horse-mounted aristocrats whose cavalry would play a very secondary role or by poor folk who could not afford to supply their own weapons and armor as required.

Hoplite battle was brutal and personal. Armed and armored hoplites advanced in their phalanxes and fought to the death. Their battlefields were scenes of furious fighting and carnage that usually consumed not more than an hour or two. Every man was pushed to the limits of his physical and psychological endurance—and then it was over, not to be repeated for a year or more.

The hoplites went into battle not for fear of punishment or in hopes of plunder and booty, as did the subject peoples of the Oriental empires. The hoplites were the middle class of the Greek city-states who owned property—usually farms—and voted. They fought to defend their liberties and home and hearth. They fought side by side with neighbors, brothers, fathers, sons, uncles, cousins. They were related by race, blood, language, religion, and tradition, and by property ownership and democracy. This meant that they did their utmost to demonstrate courage, side by side with their comrades, and that they had a vested interest in the outcome—they stood to lose everything. A loss for subject peoples, on the other hand, often meant simply a change of rulers. Pericles, in his famous funeral oration, said that the hoplites "would rather perish in resistance than find salvation through submission."

Greek citizens were called up for military service from the city-state's muster role, beginning at age 18. They remained eligible for duty until they reached 60. It was not unusual for men in their 30's and 40's to serve as frontline hoplites. No less a figure than Socrates served in several wars, fighting well into his 40's. He fought his last battle at Delion in 424 B.C. when he was 46 years old. He was one of the few who held his ground and avoided the general panic during the Athenian defeat.

The Greeks thought that a man was at his physical peak in his 30's. The Athenian lawgiver and statesman Solon called that the age when "every man reaches his highest point of physical strength." Add experience to the mix, and we can see why hoplites in their 30's and early 40's were considered the most valuable. The frontlines were often manned by well-conditioned greybeards. Said the poet Tyrtaios:

> This is indeed a foul thing, that the older man falls
> Among the forefront and lies before the younger
> His white head and his grey beard breathing out his strong soul in the dust,
> Holding in his dear hands his groin all bloody.

Many men of property and social standing served as hoplites and fought into their 40's—and a few into their 50's. Glaukon was 50 when he served as general at Samos and, later, at Corcyra. Pyrilampes was 56 when he died at Delion in 424 B.C. Andocides (the elder) was 60 when he served at Samos. Phaidros (the son of Kallias) was nearly 70 when he fought at Styra in 323 B.C. Generally, the more veterans in the ranks, the better the army. Spartan armies usually had two generations of veterans. It was common to see fathers and sons in the ranks and not rare to see grandfathers and grandsons fighting side by side. Two thousand years later, the same was true of the Gaelic clans of Ireland and Scotland. John Prebble, in *The Battle of Culloden*, says, "Brother fought beside brother, father by son, so that each might witness the other's courage and valour and find example in them."

Young men had the advantage of speed but not necessarily endurance or strength. Old men had the invaluable advantage of experience; their presence steadied the ranks. They would not falter in the fiercest of fights, and they set an example for the young warriors. Androkleidas, a partially crippled Spartan warrior, summarized it best when he was questioned about his battle-worthiness: "But there is no need of running away, but rather to stay put where I am to fight against those who are arrayed against me."

The Greek hoplites—young and old—fought in the phalanx. A box-like formation, usually eight ranks deep, the phalanx worked something like the scrum in rugby. The men in the front ranks led the assault, and those in the rear pushed. Xenophon, a student of Socrates and a hoplite, suggested that the strongest fighters be positioned at the front and the rear of the phalanx and the weakest in the middle "in order that they might be led by the former and pushed by the latter."

The key to a successful use of the phalanx was a tight formation. In the heat of battle, it was critical for men to stay in rank and to persevere—despite wounds and fatigue—in order to maintain the integrity of the phalanx. During battle, it was necessary to tighten the formation constantly. There was also a tendency for the phalanx to drift to the right; the hoplites held the shield with their left hand and the spear or sword with their right. Their right sides were thus more exposed, and therefore they tended to thrust or slash in that direction. Rigorous training, high morale, and deep camaraderie were necessary for the phalanx to work effectively. When it did, it was an awesome killing machine. Polybius, comparing the Greek phalanx to the Roman legion, said that "nothing can stand in the way of the advance of the phalanx, as long as it maintains its customary cohesion and power."

Hoplite armies usually did not attack cities. They were ill equipped for the task, lacking battering rams and artillery, and could not afford the time and expense of a long siege. Moreover, most of the time, there was no need. When an invading army crossed the border of a city-state, the defenders usually marched out from their walled cities for a battle on some nearby plain. They simply could not allow an enemy to occupy their farmlands. Timing was nearly everything for an invading enemy. It was best to arrive right at the beginning of the harvest, burn your enemy's barley and wheat, defeat him in battle or

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cow him into submission, then hurry home to harvest your own crops.

Victor Davis Hanson, a farmer and the author of several fine works on Greek warfare, has argued that the idea of agricultural devastation during the Greek hoplite wars has been greatly exaggerated. While fires are easy enough to set, trees and vines usually recover quickly. Cutting vines is not unduly difficult, but pulling out rootstock is. Chopping down trees—especially the solid trunks of the mature olive tree—is a backbreaking and time-consuming task.

If great agricultural destruction was not the norm, why did the Greeks not simply wait out the invading enemy behind the walls of their cities? First of all, a loss of a harvest could cause considerable suffering if food storage was inadequate. However, far more important to the Greek hoplite were his honor and pride. Could he huddle behind the safety of walls while an enemy was parading over his fields—the same fields his father and father's father had farmed? No, enemy hoplites in his fields were an invitation to fight that could not be refused.

In many ways, battle was a kind of ritual: An enemy army of hoplites appeared; the cry went up for the local forces to organize; a level, open plain was chosen; and the opposing phalanxes collided. The bloodshed usually ended quickly. The one battle was usually the war. Perhaps this explains why it was easy to draw a citizen army out of a city. Whatever the reason or combination of reasons, the Greeks could not seem to resist a call to battle with an enemy stomping about on their turf.

When the hoplite armies clashed, casualties were not usually as high as you might expect. The warriors' armor—a bronze breastplate, a helmet, and greaves—kept them fairly well protected. They also carried a shield, the hoplon. If the momentum of the battle—and I use the word "momentum" in its most literal sense—began to go decidedly one way and the losing side was able to maintain unit cohesion and the integrity of each individual phalanx, then a fighting withdrawal was possible and casualties minimized. However, if cohesion disintegrated, great slaughter could result. Because the Greek hoplite armies were well disciplined, great carnage was normally the exception rather than the rule.

Moreover, Greeks generally thought it unseemly to slaughter their fellow Greeks once a battle had been decided: Better to save defeated Greeks for battles against barbarians. Upon learning that his Spartans had not only defeated but annihilated an army of Corinthians, a fourth-century king of Sparta remarked, "Woe to you, Greece, those who now have died were enough to have beaten all the barbarians in battle had they lived."

For more than two centuries, the hoplite citizen-soldiers of the city-states fought each other. The rise of Persia and her invasion of Greece would change all that. The fights against the Persians were not ritual clashes between Greek city-states but wars to save the Greek world—the Western world—from Oriental despotism. The wars left Athens—or the city-state of Attica—the preeminent polis in Greece. During the last year of the second war with Persia, Athens formed the Delian League, an alliance of several city-states pledged to a united offensive and defensive action. Athens gradually transformed the league into a maritime trading empire (with herself as the principal beneficiary) and eventually extended Athenian hegemony over most of the city-states in the league.

Sparta, meanwhile, began to think that Athens, if unchecked, would soon extend Athenian hegemony over all of Greece. In response, she formed her own alliance. War between the two great powers finally erupted. Although the immediate cause was a dispute between Corcyra and Corinth, and Sparta and Athens were brought into the war because of entangling alliances, Athenian imperialism was principally responsible. Ironically, Athens had set herself on a course of imperialistic expansion through her leadership in successfully stopping Persian imperialism.

The Peloponnesian War was not a single clash of hoplite armies from two city-states on an open plain but a protracted war of attrition for an empire fought on plains, in cities, and at sea. It ended disastrously for Athens and marked the beginning of the end for the Greek city-state and for Hellenic civilization. Until the Peloponnesian War, the armies of most city-states had been composed of citizen's militias called upon only occasionally and only for a single battle. Protracted wars called for professional soldiers, not farmers or artisans volunteering to serve as hoplites. The hoplites willingly fought to preserve their liberties and to defend their kinfolk and land. Fighting to build empires was foreign to them, something that characterized Oriental tyrannies.

America, too, once had citizen-soldiers who fought to defend liberty and kinfolk and to protect hearth and home—not to build an empire.

America, too, once had citizen-soldiers who fought to defend liberty and kinfolk and to protect hearth and home—not to build an empire. Since World War II, we seem to have forgotten this simple fact, as Athens did following the Persian Wars. Her great victories led to empire-building, power, and glory but ended in disaster not only for Athens but for classical Greek civilization. I suspect that historians will one day look back at the United States and conclude that America's great victory in World War II led to empire-building, power, and glory but also marked the beginning of the end for the United States—and, ultimately, for Western civilization. Our reach now exceeds our grasp, and long ago we stopped fighting to defend our land and people.

I recall President Lyndon Johnson saying, in 1964, that he would "not send American boys 10,000 miles away to do what Asian boys could and should do for themselves." I also remember thinking, when Johnson shortly thereafter reversed himself, that those who voted to go to war in the Greek city-states went to war themselves. Those decisionmakers served as hoplites, even if they were in their 30's or 40's—or possibly older. It was, to me, the ultimate democratic value: Those who commit us to war stand in the van, shoulder-to-shoulder with other citizen-soldiers, facing the enemy. I always reckoned that LBJ would have allowed Asian boys to do for themselves if he would have been required to leave the White House to hump the hills of I Corps with a baseplate strapped to his back, accompanied by Dean Rusk packing a mortar tube and bipods, and Robert McNamara lugging ammo boxes. c

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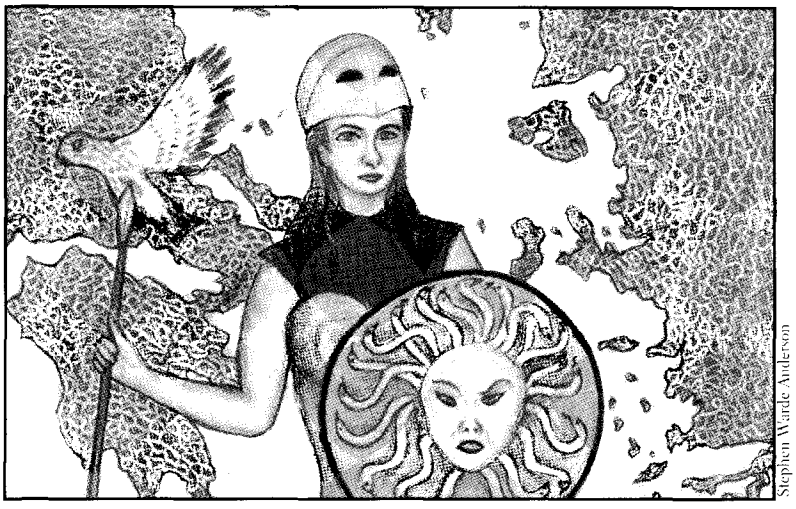
Athenian Hegemony and Its Lessons for America

by Srdja Trifkovic



Our common European civilization—of which the old American Republic is an integral part, or else it is nothing—is rooted in "the glory that was Greece." Our spiritual and intellectual mentors are to be found among Greek thinkers, scientists, and artists.

This inheritance is reflected even in the way we repeat the political follies of the Greeks: Our present leaders do not seem to know that, after leading an alliance of independent commonwealths against a mighty aggressor from the East, Athens grew rich and arrogant in the aftermath of her victory. Her leadership degenerated into hegemony, which the Athenians justified as "exporting democracy." Imperial Athens was obeyed for several decades—initially out of self-interest, then out of fear rather than respect—but in the end, it was hated. Power generated countervailing power: Other Greek city-states united against Athens, and she fell at the end of the fifth century B.C., never to recover her political or military hegemony.

Historical parallels between epochs and events can be valid only because human nature remains constant. Our jet engines and internet search engines do not make us significantly different from our European ancestors. To claim that the material progress of the past century or two makes us wiser or better than the Greeks of 25 centuries ago would be preposterous. The story of the rise and fall of Athens should remind our rulers that certain modes of political thinking and behavior will produce the same results today that they did in 404 B.C., in A.D. 1815, or in 1945.

The Persian invasion of mainland Greece in 480 B.C. played a crucial role in defining the Hellenic identity. Of the hundreds of Greek city-states, only a few dozen opposed Xerxes, the king of Persia, and only a small minority of all Greeks participated in the war, but the victory of Athens made freedom from foreign control a key element of the Greek consciousness.

In the years that followed the Persian defeat, Athenian power grew unabated. Its rise was due largely to the geopolitical genius of Themistocles, whose insistence on the need for a strong permanent navy was eminently modern in its strategic assumptions. The withdrawal of the Spartans from the continuing war against the Persians also bolstered Athens' claim—still limited and modest at that time—to be recognized as the first among equals. In order to forge closer ties with the Ionians and the islands and to prevent any further threat from the east, the Athenians established an alliance based on the island of Delos—the so-called Delian League. Formed as a defensive alliance against Persia, the league quickly evolved into a tool for furthering Athenian ambitions in Hellas proper.

What did "Hellas" mean? The notion of Hellenic unity was originally based on freely evolved institutions, such as common shrines and beliefs, alphabet, and Homeric tradition. But this spontaneous unity of culture and tradition by no means implied the necessity, let alone any widely spread desire, for a centralized state. The prevailing view of "Hellas" implied political diversity in cultural unity, an extreme version of the American view of the Old Republic.

By 468 B.C., after the Ionian cities had been liberated and the Persian fleet destroyed, many members thought it unnecessary to continue the confederacy. They acted as reasonably—and naively—as those of us who felt that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization had outlived its purpose after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Empire. In suppressing all attempts of league members to secede, the Athenians claimed, first, that the Persian danger still existed; second, that the alliance was needed to maintain and protect the large free-trade area so necessary for allied (read: Athenian) commerce; and, finally, that the alliance was needed to promote democracy. The similarity with our own times is remarkable.

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It has been said that the Athenians created an empire because they dared not destroy a confederation. This is giving them too much credit: Empires are not created by default, against the wishes of allegedly reluctant hegemonists. In order to keep her budding empire together, Athens started meddling in her clients' internal affairs and ordering their lives in the name of "spreading democracy." She aided and abetted the suppression of their local aristocratic structures and hailed herself as the leader of a union of "democratic" states. Athens' self-appointed role signaled the birth of a vision of international affairs that has created endless problems for its victims *and* proponents ever since.

Despite the self-serving rhetoric of the Athenians, to many Greeks—including Sparta, her allies, and the aristocrats exiled from cities allied with Athens—Athens was a "tyrant city" and an "enslaver of Greek liberties." Pericles sought to justify Athenian imperialism by claiming that it brought "freedom" from fear and want to the Greek world. "We did not gain this empire by force," he asserted. "Our allies came to us of their own accord and begged us to lead them." That may have been true, up to a point; but having been led, they were no longer free to thank their leaders and continue on their way.

Thucydides outlines how Athens embarked on her imperial experiment almost without pause or deliberation. As leader of the league, she fully controlled it. The Athenian citizens alone selected its treasurers. In 454 B.C., the Athenians moved the treasury of the league to their city and started collecting one sixteenth of the allies' tribute to Athena Polias, patron of Athens and now patron of the league. This money paid for the temples on the Acropolis, supported the Athenian fleet, provided work for the citizens of Athens, and fortified a reserve fund.

By 450 B.C., the Delian League had essentially become an organization of Athenian colonies whose center and treasury were now in Athens. Many of the allied leaders went along with this arrangement because they preferred political stability and commercial predictability to independence, while others no longer felt accountable to their own people. (Think of Canada's Jean Chrétien, or Britain's Tony Blair.)

The league's activities soon expanded into "anti-terrorist" operations: Scyros, Carystus, and Naxos—Greek pirate nests—were turned into Athenian settlements. An "out-of-area" operation into the non-Greek eastern Mediterranean followed. While the Athenian task force to Egypt in 459 B.C. was a major disaster, others were successful and lucrative.

After 460 B.C., the Athenians gave up the pretense of consensual leadership and initiated hostilities with Sparta's allies—and soon with Sparta itself. The fighting from 459 until 445 is sometimes called the First Peloponnesian War, but it was a mere skirmish compared to the war initiated in 431 B.C. At that time, the Athenians became the sovereign power of much of Hellas, realizing for themselves the dream of the king of Persia.

Those proud men who had only recently won over the Spartans by assuring them that nothing could enslave the Hellenes were now trying to justify their attitude by "three of the strongest motives: fear, honor and interest." "It has always been the law that the weaker should be subject to the stronger," they said. Their arrogance is revealed by Thucydides:

> [W]e know that men, by a natural law, always rule where they are stronger. We did not make that law nor were we the first to act on it; we found it existing, and it will exist forever, after we are gone; and we know that you and anyone else as strong as we are would do as we do.

Under Pericles' inept successors, Athenian imperialism showed its ugly face. In 416 B.C., the Athenians assaulted Melos, a neutral Aegean island that had been reluctant to join the Athenian empire. They ordered the death of all Melian men of military age and the enslavement of their women. The following year, the Athenians launched their fatal expedition against Syracuse (the major Greek state in Sicily), hoping to add Sicily to their empire and thus become powerful enough "to rule the whole of the Greek world." But the Syracusans, supported by Sparta, routed two Athenian fleets and a large army. The war dragged on until 404 B.C., when Athens capitulated after its last fleet was destroyed—by a Spartan fleet built with Persian money. The once great city-state was stripped of its empire.

Thucydides recognized that war is part of the human condition. Human nature, which he depicts as grasping and insatiable, is reflected in international affairs. Morality is not a guide: Even an outraged sense of justice generates strife and injustice. Furthermore, if the urge for domination is irresistible—as the Athenians claimed—it is value-neutral, rather than "unjust." Therefore, equal respect for equal power, "just" or not, is the prescription for stability and peace. It can be achieved through a balance of power.

Europeans understood this well, at least in the three centuries between the Peace of Westphalia and World War I. America's present overseas interlocutors have been forced to relearn the lesson: The logic of Madeleine Albright's "indispensable nation" leaves them no choice. The message of Thucydides is that states threatened by an American "imperium" should take on a balancing role to discourage or contain the expanding power of the United States.

The European Union, Russia, and China are beginning to understand this. As cruel as it may seem, a timely check from the outside may be the best we can hope for America; an imbalance neglected for too long can only be resolved through the disaster of war. Thucydides sees such restraint on expansion as the only viable route to peace. Those who have the power to block expansionism but fail to do so, he believed, are the true culprits. Thucydidean prudence, if properly applied, can prolong periods of peace and shorten periods of war.

The entire history of Athens, Edmund Burke maintained, was that of "Rashness, Folly, Ingratitude, Injustice, Tumult, Violence, and Tyranny, and indeed of every Species of Wickedness that can well be imagined." Concerning the Delian League in particular, he argued that the Athenians "began to tyrannize over their Equals . . . With their Prudence they renounced all Appearance of Justice." Under Pericles, whom Barthélémy described (in the 18th century) as "the most dangerous of those leaders who paid court to the multitude," the Athenians "had the insolence to avow that the only law of nations they were acquainted with was force."

There was far more to Athens than rashness and folly, as the remains of Attic drama and the ruins of the public buildings built by Pericles and the Athenians during the heyday of the empire attest. The legacy of our latter-day global hegemonists is limited to Blair's Millennium Dome, the bomb craters in the Balkans, and the library of books that have been published to exonerate a criminal president who is as similar to Pericles as Madeleine Albright is to Athena.

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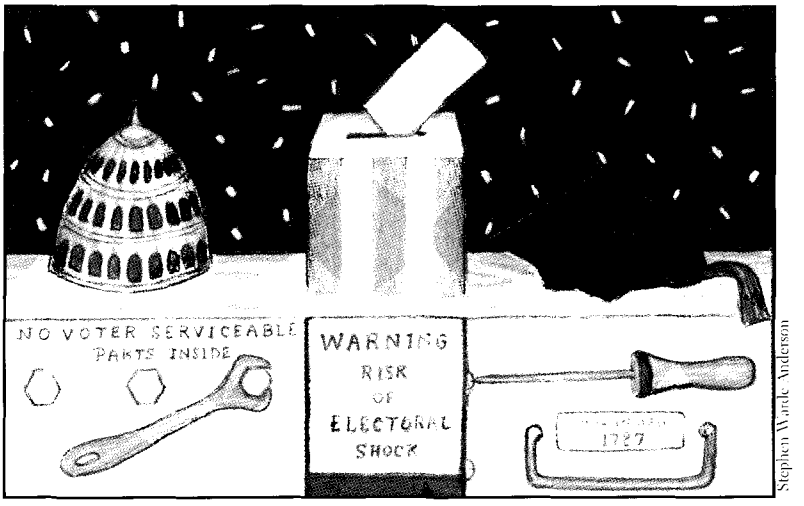
A Round Table Discussion

RESTORING THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE



Stephen Wardle Anderson

Don't Fix It

by Stephen B. Presser

The Electoral College, as we used to learn and as readers of this journal will still be aware, was supposed to be a device for removing the choice of the president from the people. Rather than direct elections, which could lead to the nation's chief executive being the best demagogue, we were supposed to have well-educated and altruistic electors, picked for their wisdom and virtue, select a similar man of character to preside over the nation's military might and execute its laws. It did not work out that way, of course, and it now seems as if demagoguery has become the chief qualification for all public offices, the presidency perhaps most of all.

The Framers feared faction, and they hoped that presidential electors would not be partisans. They tried to structure a federal system that would not allow the rise of special interests to national dominance, and they thought that, by reserving the choice of electors to state legislatures, they would make sure the interests of the individual states would be protected by the Electoral College. The Electoral College, then, was a device for protecting dual sovereignty, or federalism, just as was the Senate, where each state is entitled to equal representation. The Framers would have been horrified if they had imagined our present system where presidential electors are not selected by state legislators to serve the interests of their states, but are slated by national political parties, elected by the people of the state at large, and—if not always sworn—always understand to vote for a particular party candidate. The parties pick their candidates, not for virtue and wisdom, but for popular appeal or to accomplish a particular political agenda.

Should we then, if we are interested (as we are, here at *Chronicles*) in the Old Republic notions of virtue, character, and the primacy of state sovereignty, seek to amend the Constitution to do away with the Electoral College system and substitute something more carefully calibrated to reproduce the Old Republic? I do not think so. Consider, for the nonce, the fact that—as soon as it became clear that Al Gore had won the popular vote—virtually the first act of Senator-elect Hillary Rodham Clinton was to call for the abolition of the Electoral College, and that her voice was joined in anthem chorus by a host of media commentators and a brace of other left-leaning redistributionist and large-federal-government-type congresspersons.

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They wanted the president chosen simply by the popular vote. The enemy of my enemy is my friend, say the Arabs, and we ought to pause before dismantling the Electoral College.

The choices the Electoral College now offers us are limited to a particular party candidate, but in the last election, that choice was between one person who was at least publicly sympathetic to federalism and one who clearly was not. The federalist did not have a majority of the popular vote, but he did have a majority of the Electoral College once he secured Florida. He also was clearly the choice of people living in approximately 80 percent of the territory of the United States, and he only failed to carry counties in heavily populated coastal and urban areas. One can win the popular vote, then, and not be the candidate favored by most people living in the American heartland, the South, the mountains, and most of the other locales of American folklore, song, and literature. In short, if there is a lesson from the last election, it may be that real diversity—not the politically correct kind, but the kind that reflects the virtues of the Old Republic—is still preserved by the Electoral College.

For all of its faults, the modern Electoral College, because it assigns numbers of electors based in part on equality of the states, still has the potential to preserve the interests of a majority of those states and to counteract the will of a geographically concentrated plurality of the American people. The Electoral College was designed to secure what is best about the United States—geographical tradition, true virtue, and national character—and I think it still does. It might be made to do it better, but because of the concentration of the popular vote in this country, the chances of getting a constitutional amendment through Congress and two thirds of the state legislatures to accomplish the purpose are negligible. The Senate and the House are already too dominated by the evanescent and the popular, and any amendments to the Constitution regarding the Electoral College which come out of Congress are more likely to please Mrs. Clinton and her friends than ours. It is not broken, and I say, "Don't fix it." c

Consider the Alternative

by Philip Jenkins

Wessex and Aquitaine, Arizona and Pennsylvania. All were, once upon a time, regions that had a distinct political identity, genuine states in which one could be a citizen or a subject. The first two survive only in the would-be romantic kitsch peddled by tourist boards; the others still survive as real states, but not for lack of attempts to reduce them to mere geographical expressions. Ever since the New Deal, American elites have often shared the attitudes that prompt naive European visitors to ask so often, "Why does America allow the states so much power?" It gets increasingly difficult to explain—either to Americans or Europeans—the fundamental fact that the states created the nation, under a constitutional document that lays down precise limits beyond which the federal government should not venture.

After so many nagging attacks on federalism, the latest has erupted over the institution of the Electoral College—ironically, as a direct consequence of the 2000 presidential election, which represented probably the best advertisement the college method could have had. Precisely because of the college system, it was easy to limit to only four or so states the damage caused by flagrant electoral corruption, fraudulent voting, and the mass destruction of authentic ballots. Even if a city or region goes totally out of control, permitting the mass creation of bogus voters, the gains that can be made by such devious means are confined to only a few states where corruption can be identified and electoral votes can be disputed. In a national system, by contrast, there would be an obvious temptation to "run up the score" in favored areas, and some have long expertise in this. Ending the Electoral College would place a premium on electoral manipulation unparalleled since the notorious machines that operated in Texas and Kansas City in the 1940's. The only difference is that, this time around, bogus votes could not easily be challenged unless one was prepared to face crippling charges of racist bias, of seeking to disfranchise the poor. And last year's experiences in Florida showed that state and local electoral officials have no shame whatsoever in permitting (and promoting) the most outrageous electoral fraud.

The system, in short, worked awfully well in 2000. So well, in fact, that we should not be surprised that it provoked immediate calls for its abolition from those who stand to benefit most from the uncontrolled manufacture of urban votes. There was a delightful moment when the *New York Times* reported one particular attack under the headline "Hilary Clinton Calls for Abolition of Electoral System." I initially took this to be a startlingly frank appeal for the elimination of representative government as such, except insofar as one was indirectly represented by means of corporate interest blocs based on race, ethnicity, sex, or sexual preference—but of course, that epoch-making social innovation will probably not be implemented for another decade or two.

The case against the Electoral College is pathetically weak. Before the 2000 debacle, only two presidential elections (1824 and 1876) probably resulted in the college defeating "the will of the people" as expressed in popular ballots. That is a striking record of convergence, especially since the American system was never intended to be based on popular democracy. If readers will excuse a statement of the obvious, the U.S. president was to be elected by the states, not by the people. This emphasis was, and remains, a highly desirable mechanism for ensuring that the interests of smaller states are not trampled by their more populous neighbors. That concern has proved all the more significant since the booming "large states" of one generation often prove to be the defenseless midgets of the next. Defending the interests of the weak today might well mean securing one's

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own interests in decades to come. That is federalism, and it has worked well.

The real scandal of 2000 was not that the "people's will" was stymied, but rather that so many Americans demonstrated such a stunning ignorance of how the system worked, and more important, why it was set up that way. Unless that situation changes, unless people can understand that the states are not just an antiquarian survival but the pivotal element of the constitutional system, we can say goodbye to federalism and accept an untrammeled unitary megastate. And by that point, Arizona and Pennsylvania will have precisely as much political substance as, well, Wessex or Aquitaine. c

Roll Over, James Madison

by Clyde Wilson

To anyone who has spent some time with the Framers and ratifiers of the U.S. Constitution, most current talk about that document seems not about the Constitution at all but about some fanciful construct of wishful thinking, accumulated misunderstandings, and successful usurpations. This is certainly so in regard to the recent discussions of the Electoral College.

True, the Electoral College was, as is now complained of, in part designed to take the selection of president a remove or two from the people. The reason for this was not to thwart the people's will but to induce deliberation and mature consideration of the public good and the virtues of candidates by persons who were in a position to have some solid knowledge of the matter. This design, of course, has been rendered null by the machinations of political parties. Electors are now anonymous party hacks whose names often do not even appear on the ballot and who would not know what you are talking about if you mentioned deliberation and judgment.

But an even more important consideration in the design of the Electoral College was the representation of the states. There was no possibility of a mass vote, since each state set its own qualifications for the franchise and chose the electors in its own manner—by the legislature or by districts in the beginning. States no longer set their franchise: The federal government now requires us to allow 18-year-olds to vote and to register aliens when they show up at the drivers' license bureau.

Nevertheless, the Electoral College, at least potentially, represents the states. The smaller states were given more weight, by a design (and necessity at the time) that permeates the real Constitution. If the Electoral College yielded no majority, the House of Representatives was to make the choice, *with each state having one vote*. In fact, the Framers expected this to happen quite often.

The functioning of the Electoral College was perverted in the 19th century by political party organizations. The people could (and can today) vote only for candidates selected by party conventions, which are neither democratic nor recognized by the Constitution. (A lot of Americans probably think the two parties are part of the Constitution.) This is, in fact, a much more serious denial of majority rule than the weight given to small states in the college. So is the winner-take-all system, another invention of the party hacks.

There is nothing in the Constitution that requires all the votes of a state to go to one candidate. According to present practice, a candidate may win California with a 35-percent vote in a three-way race and receive all of California's electoral votes, thereby disenfranchising two thirds of the voters. The only reason for this is that it is convenient for political parties.

If we really wanted to live up to true majority rule and preserve the virtues of the Electoral College, we would take the high constitutional function away from parties and choose electors by districts and as independents—men and women known for character and reason and an understanding of the people they represent. (Of course, they would have to be real districts, not ones designed by federal judges to maximize the success of favored groups.)

They would assemble in their state capitals and vote after deliberation and without reference to party organization or to polls and predictions and media declarations of winners on the basis of one percent of the votes. This would be closer to real majority rule and the real Constitution, and the results might be quite interesting. c

Clyde Wilson is a professor of American history at the University of South Carolina.

Dirge Without Music

by B.R. Strahan

Map of memory shadowed face
of a million names and none
fane of lost crossroads
leading everyplace and none

Secret whispered on the marriage bed
story told on the last day
language of Babel and Byzantium
what was sung "by the waters of Babylon"

Chipped icon on the crumbling wall
rotten stairway to the shattered tower
finger in the sun's angry eye
final cry before the great unfolking . . .

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True Reform

Disenfranchising the Political Parties

by Scott P. Richert

The Electoral College is an archaic institution designed by men who felt that they could not trust the people at large to choose the president—or so we are told every four years by the most ignorant members of the Fourth Estate. While it may have been true (the argument continues) that the people were relatively uninformed when the Constitution was adopted, we cannot say the same thing today. After all, we now have CNN and C-SPAN and NPR and the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Any objection the Founding Fathers could have had to popular election must surely vanish in the face of these organs of enlightenment.

Any objection, that is, except the real one. The Framers of the Constitution, although undoubtedly skeptical of the ability of the people at large to decide on national affairs, were not opposed to popular election *per se*. They allowed for direct election of the House of Representatives, and they included in the Constitution certain requirements for being able to vote—not simply because they thought suffrage should be restricted (which, of course, they did), but because they wanted to ensure that states could not impose more strict suffrage requirements in national elections.

Why, then, did the Framers establish the Electoral College? A quick glance at James Madison's notes on the Constitutional Convention reveals the answer. In their consideration of the election of the president, as in so many other areas, the Framers were concerned with two problems: mitigating the influence of faction and preserving the sovereignty of the states. If the president were elected by popular vote, the opportunities for factious demagoguery were great, and the states could, essentially, be disenfranchised by their own citizens. State sovereignty could be preserved by allowing the state legislatures to determine the method of appointing electors; the popular will would still be taken into account, since the people elected their state legislators.

Today, as far as state sovereignty is concerned, the Constitution is essentially a dead letter. The Electoral College is the only significant vestige of the Old Republic that reminds us that the states are not simply administrative subdistricts of the federal government—that the states, in fact, created the federal government. But while proposed constitutional amendments to abolish the Electoral College have never gone anywhere, the system has been successfully undermined in the states over the years by the forces of faction, which go today by the name of political parties. Any attempt to restore the Electoral College to its full function as conceived by the Framers must confront the problem of political parties—and, therefore, it is probably doomed to failure. Still, it does not hurt to dream.

The 12th Amendment, ratified in 1804, was the earliest change to the Electoral College; it was also one of the most damaging, because it is one of the few instances in which the Constitution was changed to reflect the party system. (The 25th Amendment, allowing the president to appoint a vice president if the office is vacant, and the 14th Amendment, which disenfranchised a large number of Southern Democratic Party leaders and therefore ensured the primacy of the Republican Party, are the other instances.) While the amendment does not mention political parties, it sets up separate elections for president and vice president, making it almost inevitable that the two will come from one party; until that point, the man who received the second-highest number of electoral votes became vice president, regardless of his party affiliation. Repealing the 12th Amendment would strike a blow at the heart of the party system.

Any other reform should take place at the state level, because that is where the damage has been done. While the Constitution allows state legislatures to determine the method of appointing electors, every state now uses the popular vote. State legislatures might consider appointing electors based on the popular vote within each congressional district, allocating one of the two extra votes to the winner of the statewide popular vote and the other to the candidate who wins the largest number of congressional districts. While this system would force candidates to campaign within each congressional district, it would (unfortunately) probably strengthen the party system, since the districts are created by (and for) the parties (with a touch of judicial intervention).

A more radical proposal would be to return to the Framers' vision of appointing electors on the basis of their qualifications, rather than party affiliation. By adopting this idea, a few brave state legislatures could potentially deprive both of the major parties of the ability to construct an Electoral College majority. At the very least, they could force the presidential candidates to address issues that concern each state at large. Under the current winner-take-all system (which every state except Maine and Nebraska has adopted), candidates can simply pander to large urban populations and ignore the bulk of the state. Although Rockford is the second-largest city in Illinois, no presidential candidate has stopped here since 1988, because Chicago can manufacture more than enough votes to allow a candidate to win Illinois' 22 electoral votes. Returning to the Framers' original plan would not only restore a measure of state sovereignty; it would re-enfranchise millions of voters in small cities, towns, and countrysides across the United States. c

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Scott P. Richert is the executive editor of Chronicles.

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Modern Elections and Heads of Households

"I Have No Use of Thee"

by Aaron D. Wolf

What makes voting for your ruler a legitimate practice? Jean-Jacques Gore prattled nonstop throughout November about the need for "every vote to count" because then, and only then, would the "will of the people" be expressed. And Republicans offered no real counterargument, other than the sage comment of (President?) Bush: "We've counted the votes; now it's time for the votes to count." But why should they? After witnessing this circus, why should we dare to imagine that the men and women of America could elect the best ruler by casting votes?

The United States has a representative government; we vote for the leaders who will best represent our "interests" and "values." But whom do we have in mind when we say *our* interests? And whom do the Congress and president represent: individuals, families, states, or the State? The answer goes to who we think we are—how we define ourselves.

The establishment of power has always been based on the consent of some group of people. Despots take power through the pledges of soldiers and mercenaries to fight. In a republic, lesser magistrates who represent the interests of communities and families can select a president. A monarch can fall somewhere between the two, depending on his moral character and the attitudes and loyalties of the nobles who supply his army. In a democracy, voters live with the illusion of "self-rule." St. Augustine, however, warned that man has as many rulers as he has passions; thus, many a despot has come to power not by wielding a sword, but by seeking to gratify the passions of the masses of voters.

Rousseau championed the sovereignty of the "General Will" on the one hand, and the ideal of the "noble savage," unencumbered by the oppressive constraints of family and the constructions of society, on the other. He was right to connect the two, because all true democracies seem destined to be ruled by a savage—or savages—and that is precisely where America has been headed ever since the states (and eventually the federal government) began expanding the franchise of suffrage from those who represent the interests of families (the heads of households) and communities (landowners) to each and every individual, regardless of his knowledge, responsibility within the community, or general means to sustain himself. Is it any wonder, then, that the extension of suffrage has resulted in the majority selling its birthright of freedom for a bowl of soup?

The 19th Amendment was the ultimate renunciation of this birthright, because it disenfranchised women in their natural role as wife and mother. The official policy of our federal government toward women since 1920 has been to demote them from the vocation assigned them by nature (and nature's God) to the level of common chad-puncher—one of the boys. The assumption of the female suffrage movement was that individuals, not families, compose society, or that the interests of individuals outweigh, overrule, or even invalidate those of families. Either way, female suffrage has created further occasions for sin for men, by stripping them of their duties as heads of households. If freedom is the ability to be what you were made to be and do what you are called to do, female suffrage has been a primary enemy of freedom in America.

The suffragettes were lead by women hell-bent on rearranging and redefining society. Most were wealthy debutantes who did not see their lives' vocations in domestic terms. The Jane Addams and Elizabeth Stantons of the world did not want to have their own children; they wanted to have the world's children. They had no use for a man as head of the household. Thus, after the triumph of the suffrage movement, the duties of heads of households were gradually strip-mined and handed over to the government.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the duties of the head of the household are several. He is to provide for his family's (including aging parents') material needs by working and earning a living. He is to bear the mantle of responsibility for the family's spiritual and moral status by governing the household justly and, ultimately, by giving an account to God for his wife and children. He is to protect his family from all harm, being willing to kill (if necessary) an intruder in the home, be he a robber or a pimple-faced boy attempting to steal his daughter's chastity.

This idea has become a relic of the past. Any debate about federal gun-control measures, for example, always begins with a defense of "hunters and sportsmen." Nearly everyone assumes that it is the role of government to protect his or her household. And what about providing for the aged? That, too, is the responsibility of government. Earning a living? We have welfare and SSI.

When the Electoral College is dissolved in favor of a nationwide popular vote, the last vestige of a system designed to reflect the natural order will have disappeared. It is inevitable, however, because Americans do not believe in the family and its corresponding "representative" government—they believe in individuals and the "will of the people." Families are but arrangements of convenience and tradition, to be disposed of when they become obtrusive. This poison had entered the popular conscience long before women were granted suffrage.

The task that lies before men who wish to see meaningful, conservative reform to our system of elections is immense, and it ultimately transcends the importance of restoring republican government. Men have to reclaim their role as heads of households. This may mean working two jobs so Mom can stay home to rear the children. It may mean undertaking the task of re-educating yourself so that you can direct the catechization of your children at home, instead of in the schools of the central government. And it may mean buying a gun—yes, even an assault weapon—and learning how to use it. These measures may not change the hearts of the suffragettes of America, but over time, women of good will can be convinced that their last vote should be to repeal the 19th Amendment. Until then, voting in America will be, from a Judeo-Christian perspective, illegitimate. c

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"All the News Unfit to Print"

Signs of the Times

Vol. 3 No. 2 February 2001

The world is breathing a sigh of relief now that the American electorate has found the cure for the mad-cow disease that has afflicted U.S. foreign policy for so many years. Still, her memory lingers in world capitals, where they continue to tell Madeleine Albright stories—for example, of her repeated unsuccessful attempts to procure an invitation to visit Belgrade from the new Yugoslav leadership. "No member of the Clinton team was more enthusiastically determined to bomb Serbia in March 1999 than Albright," according to a source,

> and it was therefore remarkable to observe the zeal with which she tried to get herself invited to Serbia by the new government . . . She first tried through [the U.S. diplomat William] Montgomery, who came to Belgrade to congratulate . . . Vojislav Kostunica, a week after Milosevic's downfall. But when Kostunica politely declined Montgomery's request . . . formally on the grounds of his busy schedule, she sent him a hand-written letter in Serbian expressing her earnest wish to "congratulate him and his people" in person, and expressing her warm personal feelings for the Serbian people.

Such professions evoked a wry smile from the new Serbian leaders. They were determined not to grant this wish to the woman who had contributed, more than anyone else, to the tone and shape of America's policy in the Balkans throughout Bill Clinton's tenure. They were also fully aware that Albright's and Clinton's intention was to co-opt the fall of Milosevic into their shrinking "legacy," thus indirectly justifying the bombing campaign itself. American diplomats returned from Belgrade with the message that high-level meetings would have to wait until there was a new administration in Washington. Our source continues:

> Never the one to take "no" for an answer . . . Albright tried to entrap Kostunica into meeting her at the OSCE meeting in Vienna . . . in the last week of November. A week before the meeting her aides told reporters, on the condition of anonymity, that a meeting had been finally scheduled. On November 16 all wire services—and national dailies on the following day—duly carried the news attributed to "U.S. government sources" that the meeting was definitely on. They did not know that this was Albright's deliberate attempt to present the Serbs with [a] fait accompli. In fact Belgrade was not even informed, let alone consulted, before the story was presented to the media as [a] done deal. She expected that Kostunica would play along, unwilling to jeopardize the proposed U.S. assistance package. Well, he didn't—and she ended up eating humble pie . . .

With such brains in charge of U.S. diplomacy, it is hardly remarkable that Mr. Clinton's Middle East "peace process" resulted in a drastic escalation of violence in the region and the loss of U.S. credibility—this time not only among the Arabs but among many Israelis. As the *Jerusalem Post* wrote (November 27):

> Israel is in urgent need of an objective and honest broker who shares the confidence of all sides to bring [them] to the negotiating table, while reducing tension and violence. America cannot do it; Russia has no serious clout. The solution must be found elsewhere, perhaps in one of the European Union countries.

Three days earlier, Dore Gold, a former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, wrote that American "evenhandedness is a recipe for disaster." On November 23, the *Jerusalem Post's* editorialist bewailed Clinton's "pallid tolerance of Palestinian aggression" that necessitated Israeli military escalation:

> It would be some, however minor, comfort if the U.S. refusal to support even minimal and largely symbolic Israeli efforts at self-defense were a function of State Department evenhandedness run amuck, not the will of the president. Unfortunately . . . it is Clinton himself who has been unwaveringly evenhanded since the Palestinian attack against Israel began.

While such accusations are greeted with wide-eyed astonishment in the Arab world, both Arabs and Jews can agree on the issue of American credibility. The Palestinian daily *Al-Ayyam*, which is close to Arafat's administration, echoed the view from Jerusalem in an editorial on November 27:

> Washington is watching communications among various mediators in Moscow, Ankara and some Arab capitals [which] does not mean that the White House has abandoned the idea of preventing anyone else from participating effectively in the political process. The reason for this is that Washington has lost its credibility and balance as a semi-neutral mediator. In addition, its dominance has been challenged because Israel continues to commit stupidities that embarrass Washington and make the task of defending its ally very difficult.

In Lebanon, *As-Safir* pointed out (November 25) that, following a complete breakdown in Israeli-Palestinian communications, a telephone call was arranged between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Yassir Arafat under the auspices of the Russian president:

> The intifada did not change the situation of the Palestinian ne-

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> gotiations significantly, but the real achievement was in the international sponsorship of the peace process. The United States, which is completely biased toward Israel, is no longer the only sponsor . . .

Some Europeans agreed: The *London Guardian* noted in its lead editorial (November 30) that there was a mounting Arab sense that George W. Bush would be more evenhanded and less attached to the Israeli cause than a Democratic administration:

> Barak's election gamble may, therefore, produce nothing more than a pause while everyone reconsiders, the Americans work out who their next president is, and the Palestinians decide whether they need to develop a new strategy. This could mean an effort to mobilize more players in the field, including European governments and Russia. The more people who can explain to the Israelis that long-term security lies in genuine compromise with the millions with whom they share the land, the better. If the Americans won't, others must.

Italy's *Corriere della Sera* wrote (November 28) that "the political vacuum in America gives Putin a hand in reaffirming an international role for his country," while in Germany, the right-of-center *Financial Times Deutschland* sardonically added (November 30) that, "as long as the superpower focuses more on questions of dimpled or pregnant chads, it will be of no help as mediator in the Middle East."

Which brings us to the little-known details of foreign coverage of the disputed presidential election. At first, many overseas commentators favorably remarked on the ability of the American system to seek the resolution of a disputed election by legal means. But after the first two weeks of wrangling, the mood started changing. *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* of Munich wrote (November 20):

> The United States is cultivating a political style that generates near-fright in Europe. The radicalism, the brutality of the legal maneuvering, and the cold-blooded partiality are alien to Europeans who have been destined to embrace consensus and create coalitions. However, the high TV ratings and the Americans' remarkable interest in their domestic spectacle should not distract from the fact that most American citizens reject the blood hunt as a political device.

From a distance, it was apparently easier to sum things up weeks in advance. Moscow's *Vremya Novosti* declared as early as November 20 that "basically, the winner is already known. The name of the United States' 43rd president is George Walker Bush—but the Gore people are doing their utmost to delay the defeat."

In the Arab world, the commentary had a predictable tinge, illustrated by Egypt's pro-government *Al-Ahram* (November 14):

> When the recount occurred, Jews, and none other, rushed to file suits to invalidate the elections . . . The Jewish lobby knows the facts but does not want to emerge empty-handed, especially since Bush's victory will mean Republican control of the White House.

In addition, various Third World dictators—from Baghdad to Tripoli to Havana to Harare—had a field day with their attempts at mockery. But America's friends, too, eventually moved from concern to consternation. A week after the election, Jamaica's business-oriented *Daily Observer* called the outcome "a triumph of mediocrity":

> There may be another lesson to be learned by Americans from all this: that they may think twice when adopting a supercilious arrogance to political problems and instability elsewhere in the world.

Germany's *Frankfurter Allgemeine* also wondered (November 21) "how difficult it will be for the new president to dispel doubts about his legitimacy." *Handelsblatt* of Düsseldorf summed up the views of many Europeans (November 20):

> The fact that U.S. judges apparently have to decide the presidential race is not scandalous. What is scandalous . . . is the way in which both candidates politicize the legal battle. Suits are being filed to win time. Judges are being pressured in public. All of this is made worse by the fact that many judges take office by being elected, practically as candidates of the two political parties.

In Italy, the conservative *Il Giornale* commented on its front page (November 21) that, "accustomed as they are to judging the world and giving it lessons of democracy, the American people discover now that the rest of the world is making fun of the United States." *La Repubblica* noted "signs of a banana republic-like degeneration in Florida," while in South Africa, Ray Hartley commented in the *Sunday Times* (November 19) that Robert Mugabe has been positively gloating over America's loss of the moral high ground:

> The United States and Zimbabwe now sit uncomfortably together somewhere on the gray scale of voting irregularity, the difference being one of degree, rather than principle. . . . The United States may lose much of its ability to preach to despots who want to cook their elections, and a president elected by a minority, should this come to pass, will hardly be an effective advocate of majority rule. Brace yourself for postponed elections, rigged elections and minority rule, all of it justified with a sarcastic swipe at the mother of all democracies.

Speaking of South Africa, it is curious that the American media—once so eager to lionize Nelson Mandela as a saintly multiracialist—deemed it fit to report on the former president's open exploitation of race in the country's local elections last December. According to *South Africa Now* (www.mg.co.za/mg/za/archive/2000dec/03dec-news.html#race), Mandela, speaking on behalf of the all-black ANC—and attacking the multiracial opposition Democratic Alliance, which is led by Jewish anti-apartheid activist Tony Leon—assured his audience that "no white party can run this country" and that, "no matter how they cover up by getting a few black stooges," whites want to "remain the bosses."

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Flannery Flummery

by J.O. Tate

"[I]f I were not a Catholic, I would have no reason to write, no reason to see, no reason to feel horrified or even to enjoy anything . . . I feel myself that being a Catholic has saved me a couple of thousand years in learning to write."
—Flannery O'Connor

Flannery O'Connor:
The Obedient Imagination
by Sarah Gordon
Athens: University of Georgia Press;
270 pp., $29.95

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Professor Gordon provokes—she certainly does not evoke—memories of days in Milledgeville, Georgia, four decades ago and more, when Flannery O'Connor was a presence in that notable town, formerly the capital of the Peach State. Though Dr. Gordon is a professor of English in the same town, at the college from which O'Connor was graduated, and though she is the editor of the *Flannery O'Connor Bulletin*, she does not write, it seems, "from" that place. Indeed, she seems to be contemptuous of it. She knows better than Milledgeville did or does, and also—more strikingly—better than Flannery O'Connor herself. Her volume, decades in the making, is remarkably ambivalent in relation to its subject. About that equivocation, I will have more to say.

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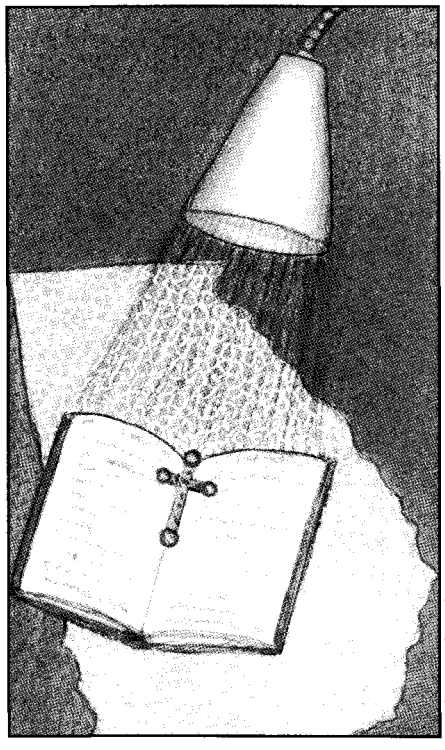

Stephen Wardle Anderson

But first, I think, the principle of full disclosure requires me to acknowledge that I was once associated with the *Flannery O'Connor Bulletin* myself. Indeed, the *Flannery O'Connor Bulletin* was my idea, though it was never my doing. Have the founder and the first and second editors of the bulletin gone uncited in Gordon's book because they actually knew and understood Flannery O'Connor in context? Be that as it may, though time has taken its toll, there are still people in Milledgeville and elsewhere who remember O'Connor as she was. Gordon has made it necessary to name the person rather than the author, for her analyses of works lead inevitably toward deprecation of the writer who inscribed them.

Dr. Gordon, by beginning her account of O'Connor "heartened by the steady increase in her readership" in the last 30 years, seems to be saying that her acquaintance with the O'Connor *oeuvre* is the history of O'Connor's reputation. Gordon claims to have been "appalled by the lack of knowledge about—and even worse, the apparent lack of interest in—O'Connor's strange, funny, deeply haunting tales." Funny she should mention that, because it was not so, though she has tried to make it be. Gordon goes on to deprecate the O'Connor Collection as it was 30 years ago in the library of the Georgia State College for Women (O'Connor's alma mater), while neglecting to mention that it was the only one of its kind and did register a recognition of O'Connor's work. "[W]e were convinced that O'Connor would inevitably find her readership and that even locally she would be recognized." But O'Connor had already made her mark locally as well as in the nation and the world, so

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again it was not so. Dismissing O'Connor's "popularity in the college English Department" and "a handful of local enthusiasts," Gordon is dismissing precisely those people who knew Flannery O'Connor and her work when she herself arrived belatedly on the scene. History begins with Sarah Gordon! These opening fallacies are the equivalent of saying that Gordon's solipsism amounts to what there is to be known about O'Connor, and that she is the only authority in Milledgeville on the subject.

As far as local recognition is concerned, I distinctly remember being with my classmate and friend Walter Reeves in 1960 as he regaled his mother and me with a spirited reading of the passage in *The Violent Bear Away* in which the young Tarwater pretends to be an idiot in order to fool the truant officer. In response, there was much laughter all around, as Walter held his new hardbound first edition, still in its purple dust jacket. The 1962 second edition of *Wise Blood* was in a red dust jacket when I bought a copy from Mrs. Colgrove at her gift shop, Marc's. I gave that copy to another friend, Marion Combs, who read it forthwith and understood it completely. He said he was quite moved by it, as well he should have been, even though he was a mere local fellow of 17 years. I think he read *The Faerie Queene* for the first time that year also, because he had already pretty much done Shakespeare. You know, it is just remarkable what these hicks from the sticks will get up to.

Yes, indeed, people in Milledgeville knew who Flannery O'Connor was, though not all of them cottoned to her. My grandmother, for instance, did not take to her work—her taste ran more to Mrs. Gaskell. But my parents responded not only to her work but to O'Connor herself. My mother enjoyed her and admired her; my father loved her and would do—indeed *did do*—anything he could to help her. They saw quite a bit of her at her home, Andalusia. I saw Miss O'Connor many times, embarking from her mother's car on crutches, proceeding to lunch at the Sanford House. (Let me digress to say that lunch at the Sanford House was something else—you do not see beaten biscuits on a menu very often. I even remember the salad dressing.) Oddly enough (and speaking of narcissism), Flannery O'Connor saw *me*: She even mentioned doing so in a letter that has yet to be exposed to the world, or to analysis by aliens. But in those days, it was routine to see Flannery in front of the old Campus Theater, sitting in the right hand seat of the O'Connor car while her mother ran errands, as she greeted and was greeted by all sorts of people.

That was on the street. But I remember another occasion when Maryat Lee and her niece, Deanie, took me up to Andalusia to visit with that person who was so often the topic of conversation. The view from the farmhouse, I knew, had been "done." (I was to remember that line of trees and the sun and the peacocks later on when I read that Gustav Mahler once declared to Bruno Walter, as the latter gaped at his summer environment, "I've composed that already.") Flannery O'Connor, on that occasion at least, was recessed in shade in the house. She was composed, guarded, and centered in a certain way that I had never known before, and have not since, though I have encountered perhaps a few other geniuses. I think that part of her self-possession and her achieved simplicity was essentially a matter of efficiency. O'Connor did not waste her energy, since that was challenged, but saved the best part of herself for what was most important, the cultivation of her vision.

The last time I saw Flannery O'Connor was on August 4, 1964, but I did not really see her because she was in a coffin at the time.

Turning from these recollections to Dr. Gordon's account of O'Connor, I find I have at best a mixed bag before me. I think there are some good things in the book—such as the author's comments about James Thurber as cartoonist and stylist—that are insightful and useful. There is too much in it that paraphrases the work of others, but what is worse is its insistence on an "openness" which is a path to confusion. "Flannery O'Connor" has been treated extensively, but finally she was her own best critic, and remains so. That is because she insisted on knowing her own mind, and because she meant it when she said that the sensibility and the dramatic imagination had to be fused. When she was at the top of her form, they were. That being the case, she left less for analysts to work with than other writers have done, if only in the sense that what seems to be seamless perfection, as in "Good Country People," has a way of quelling comments other than "Good grief!" or "Brava! Encore!"

I do not at all mean to say that O'Connor is immune or impervious to criticism or analysis because, in the first place, it is through these that we understand craft and, in the second, not all of O'Connor's work has perfect pitch. I do not think that "A View of the Woods" or "The Comforts of Home" (to mention two stories) are equal to her best work. Nor do I believe, the world being as it is, that Flannery O'Connor has any claim to exemption from the trashing routinely directed at other writers, such as the wife-oppressing Nathaniel Hawthorne, the wife-beating Herman Melville, or the wife-abusing F. Scott Fitzgerald, to name but three. And it is just at this point that we see the problem that has congested Dr. Gordon's rhetoric. Framing the question that is, in effect, "When did F O'C stop beating her wife?" is not so easy.

That question takes masked forms, such as the problem of O'Connor's religion. This is presented by Dr. Gordon as the internalization of "patriarchal values," which might lead us to ask two questions of our own. The first would be, What in blazes are *matriarchal* values? (A matriarchy has never been identified, as Marvin Harris has pointed out.) Then another question: If being a Catholic and embracing a rational aesthetic (as from the New Critics) represents adopting the "male gaze," then what exactly are we talking about? O'Connor's religious commitment and her aesthetic models are, after all, the ones she knew. Without them, she is unimaginable, because they made her what she was. As for womanhood itself, why has O'Connor's notable achievement as a woman been written off by feminists? Is it because she dismissed feminism and had such a keen sense of the demonic forces hidden behind mental disorder, or was it because of the jealousy keenly felt by the ungifted and ungracious for the superior attainment of the artist, or was it both—or even something else from the feminist funny farm we have not heard about yet? And if the achievement of art, the maintenance of faith, and the acceptance of early death count so little from this woman, then who cares about anything anyway?

But having played the feminist card while frequently acknowledging its irrelevance, Dr. Gordon has played the race card as well. It was Flannery O'Connor, if I am not mistaken—and not any delegate to the left wing of the Democratic Party—who wrote "The Artificial Nigger," in which the author showed—through a decrepit, vulgar, and mysterious lawn ornament—the action of grace

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on two benighted but not unredeemed souls. That black totem is a warped Christ, and as such clearly implies that the African-American in the South has been a Christ-figure at least, crucified on the cross of unreasoning hatred, and even an agent of God's grace. Not one writer in the history of American literature has ever done as much so economically and so uncannily to make us see the race business in a new light. Yet that has not deterred Dr. Gordon from suggesting, often by quoting others, that there is something wrong with O'Connor on race. She was not enthusiastic enough about the civil-rights movement; not only that, she used "the 'n' word" in her private correspondence. We have not heard yet from the Rev. Al Sharpton about this, but there are other troubles with this line of attack, the worst of which is the last step—namely, that it circles back to the subtextual assertion of the moral superiority of Sarah Gordon to the subject of her biography.

There are other things I was less than satisfied with in this book, but there is a limit here on space. For one thing, the discussion of O'Connor's letters veers unnecessarily but predictably into a denigration of the integrity of the late Sally Fitzgerald, O'Connor's editor and biographer and a great lady who is sorely missed. The exercise is crowned with the claim that attacks on O'Connor's person through her letters are justified in order to avoid reducing her to "pious platitude or dogmatic exemplum." That is another straw-man argument. O'Connor herself denied she was a saint, but her "canonization" is not the point. The point is that she was a person who impressed some in her lifetime as a saint, and there are not many people, and certainly not many writers, of whom one can say as much. Haggling over O'Connor's letters is silly. The point to make about them is that they are a wealth of information about her character and mind, and that they are quite possibly the greatest collection of letters in the history of our national literature. But by the time she comes to mishandling this exposition, Gordon's credibility is already shattered by her insistence on the legitimacy and equality of every view of O'Connor, and by her maneuvering everything about O'Connor to a point of contention that becomes tedious. O'Connor is funny and haunting—but she is loveless and severe. She *is this, but she is not that. So why are we* reading about her, then? The stories we cannot imagine and cannot write are better than the ones O'Connor did, so let us imagine what O'Connor might have been like if she had been more like us—but she was not.

I think, though nobody asked, that there is work still to do on the topic of O'Connor. I think she should be examined as a poet in matters of rhetoric (there are some good pages on that in Gordon's book), rhythm, and diction. The way that O'Connor sometimes ends her stories with an expansion of sound and range is quite effective and could benefit from some detailed attention. I think, too, that there is yet more to say, as Gordon has also done, about some of O'Connor's sources or resources, elements of her blend. I am thinking not only of Chapter XVII of *Huckleberry Finn*, but also of Chapter VIII of *Maggie, a Girl of the Streets*. I once made an argument that Stephen Crane was an important influence on O'Connor, but how could I have omitted such an example as the one I have indicated? To read the bitterly satirical passage as Pete shows Maggie a dime museum ("where rows of freaks astonished her. She contemplated their deformities with awe and thought them a sort of chosen tribe") is to become alert. In the passage following, we read about a "monkey" and "monkeys" and "mummies," and then about a naive viewing of popular melodrama on stage. Change the play to a movie, and we are in O'Connor territory, sure enough. That is interesting to me, but even if it is not interesting to anyone else, at least it does not involve the moral improvement of Flannery O'Connor but an attempt to see a small part of how she did what she did.

Even so, in the end we must address the phrase or the idea of "The Obedient Imagination." It hardly seems to be a useful or appropriate handle for the O'Connor phenomenon, but a euphemism or substitution for something else—"O'Connor's Idiosyncratic Catholic Imagination," perhaps; or "The Politically Incorrect Imagination," even better. Was it "obedient" for O'Connor to leave home to seek further education, for example? Was it obedient for her to go her own way, at Iowa City and at Yaddo, refusing to act out the self-serving role of the bohemian artist? Was she obedient or subservient or pious or mincing or unctuous when she refused to be pushed around by the editor John Selby, who wound up calling her "stiff-necked, uncooperative, and unethical"? Was she deferential to Mary McCarthy or even pious, when she famously said to her, "If I thought it [the Eucharist] was only a symbol, I'd say to Hell with it"? If we remember that life-threatening illness that alone forced her back home to live with her mother, we must ask whether it had been "obedient" of her to refuse to live in Milledgeville as she established her own identity? And was it then obedient or reverent of her to finish and publish *Wise Blood*, with its lurid scenes, which were superficial causes of embarrassment at home? Was it obedient of her to continue her highly individual way in writing stories of such force that their shock was only as great as their success, soon acknowledged nationally and even internationally? How was she obedient to anything when she said of her second novel, "Nobody would have been caught dead writing it but me"? No, there was no obedience to be identified but rather the fulfillment of her sense of herself and her calling and her faith, a life elected and a vision to be embodied. There was no obedience in her distinct modulation of diction and rhythm, in the discipline of point of view and circumscription, but rather something in the nature of a new creation. And O'Connor knew perfectly well that she was writing in a hostile environment, even then.

Her work exists in an even more hostile environment now, although she was the first woman born in the 20th century to be gathered into the Library of America. What a punishment and provocation to feminist truculence and racial grandstanding the towering accomplishment of Flannery O'Connor has been and will continue to be! But if there is an obedient imagination or rather lack of imagination to be identified, it would seem to belong to Sarah Gordon. If there is one cliché of feminist blather or contemporary political presumption unsounded in her migraine-inducing discourse, I do not know what it might be, nor would I want to. The response to art should be more and other art, not the begging of every question. The response to imposing and unmistakable personal integrity should be at least respect—and better, admiration. From what Harold Bloom has called the "School of Resentment," we have learned to expect none of the above—and we have not been disappointed.

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The Executioner's Tale

by Paul Gottfried

My Love Affair With America: The Cautionary Tale of a Cheerful Conservative
by Norman Podhoretz
New York: Free Press; 248 pp., $25.00

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This "celebration" of his intense love affair with America will not likely teach Norman Podhoretz's devotees anything new. For the most part, it incorporates material that can be found in earlier autobiographical writings and in Podhoretz's other published recollections about life in New York literary circles.

My Love Affair With America includes an extended description of American Jewish life among predominantly Eastern European Jewish immigrants and their offspring in New York during and after World War II. These people made efforts to fit into what they understood as mainstream America, and if they were eager to change that mainstream (which they helped to do over time), they also cultivated their own brand of American patriotism. As defined by Podhoretz, it consisted of a general admiration for what the Founding Fathers had done, or were imagined to have done, typically understood through the prism of the New Deal. It also included identification with the Puritans as judaizing Christians and the creators of a non-antisemitic New World. Podhoretz shows how these formative elements came together in the American Jewish culture of the 40's and early 50's and found expression in *Commentary*, a magazine founded in 1945 by an archetypal Cold War liberal and strongly self-identified Jew, Elliot E. Cohen. Although Podhoretz initially pushed the same publication toward the left after assuming its editorship in 1960, he correctly identifies the orientation with which it started. He believably asserts that the Jewish community to which he belonged showed little concern about antisemitism, which it assumed was waning—to the extent it ever existed—in the United States and that the holocaust did not rank high among postwar Jewish preoccupations. Never did one encounter in the conventional Jewish discourse of the time the eventually ubiquitous charge, which found its way into *Commentary* on Podhoretz's watch, that the Nazis were driven by Christian conviction into slaughtering Jews. That was simply not the kind of thing that even inveterate goy-bashers were likely to say in 1950.

Having made these points, Podhoretz never explains—to my satisfaction at least—how the Jewish culture of his youth morphed into one he now deplores. He is right that communists and communist fellow travelers constituted only a minority of American Jews, and that after Jewish communists had embraced the party line during the years of the Soviet-Nazi pact, they lost all moral status among most of their fellow Jews. One would also have been hard pressed in those years to find significant Jewish support for gay rights or for most of the rest of the yuppie-left agenda now espoused, according to polls, by the vast majority of American Jews. The changes in mood that Podhoretz is aware of can be explained by looking at causes that his "cautionary tale" does not go into, from the self-destruction of a once self-confident WASP society to the rapidly changed position of deeply ethnocentric and long socially isolated Eastern European Jewish communities in the United States. Unlike their Sephardic and German Jewish predecessors, these groups resisted assimilation, bore continuing resentment against Christians, and became increasingly anxious about antisemitism the higher they climbed on the socioeconomic ladder. This status anxiety is apparent in Podhoretz's own invectives against alleged antisemites and in his preoccupation in this book and elsewhere with who is, and who is not, on the right side (in both senses) in matters that bear on Israel.

The most embarrassing illustrations of his obsessions are the remarks Podhoretz devotes to those he condemns as "cheerless conservatives." Among these are the New England man of letters James Russell Lowell, the historian Henry Adams, the Southern Agrarians, and "their intellectual and political descendants of the latter part of the century, the 'paleoconservatives.'" Although he tars all of these figures with the same antisemitic brush, it is unclear that any of this distinguished company wasted much time insulting Jews. Lowell represented the kind of Protestant Podhoretz should appreciate, and this Boston Brahmin associated with Jews and praised their "talent and versatility." Nonetheless, Podhoretz tells us, Lowell also made remarks, as vaguely intimated by Edmund Wilson, suggesting grave concern that Jews threatened his social class. Henry Adams, though the relevant texts are never quoted, complained portentously about the effects of the immigration of uncultivated Catholics and ambitious Jews into Protestant America. In an allegedly similar way, the paleos have committed the sins of opposing Third World immigration and disliking a development Podhoretz has a proprietary interest in preserving, American imperialism. On these subjects, our cheerful conservative is driven to distraction, revealing not only an exceedingly thin skin but also a tasteless mean streak. Thus we learn that, although paleos resemble Southern Agrarians (particularly in their undemonstrated antisemitism), these bigots are a "lesser breed and could boast no adherent of even remotely comparable stature."

After exerting himself to drive cheerless conservatives out of the public square, Podhoretz cannot be so dense as to fail to see that he and his friends have played a major role in preventing paleos from achieving the stature that earlier generations of traditionalists were able to attain. As in his earlier writings about himself, the subject of Podhoretz's celebration eventually becomes his own putative achievements, among them a signal success in marginalizing the "lesser breed" on his right while helping to shape the political conversation in collaboration with other certified "patriots."

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Marx, Albright, Blair & Gates

by Srdja Trifkovic

Empire
by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri
Cambridge, MA:
Harvard University Press;
512 pp., $35.00

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When the jacket blurb tells you that the book before you "basically combines a kojevian notion of global market as post-history (in this sense akin to Fukuyama's eschatology) with a Foucauldian and Deleuzian notion of bio-politics (in this sense crossing the road of a Sloterdijk who also poses the question of a coming techniques of the production of the human species)," you can be excused for dreading the task of reading it.

As it happens, going through almost 500 pages of Hardt's and Negri's often ponderous prose proved to be a rewarding, even eye-opening experience. It confirmed what I had always suspected: that there can be no alliance that goes "beyond the left and right" in resisting the globalist imperialism that seeks to destroy our culture, our history, our identity, and ultimately our humanity. With brutal frankness, the authors, intelligent and ruthless men of the left, allow that Empire is "bad" in its present form—violent, driven by the greed and hubris of the ruling elite—but they reject resistance based on an affirmation of human nature, family, nation, or any other form of traditional community. On the contrary, they want to channel the "enabling" potential of Empire into a post-postmodern world of their own liking. Ultimately, Empire is "bad" because it is not currently run by the likes of Hardt and Negri—but it must not be fought, lest that pleasing prospect be jeopardized.

The authors' opening description of the process of globalization is, on the whole, accurate. Globalization does not produce only global markets and circuits of production but a *global order*, a new logic and structure of rule, a new sovereignty. The process, while not spontaneous, is not dictated by any single center of rationality transcending global forces. The decline in the sovereignty of nation-states does not mean the decline of sovereignty as such; it "has taken a new form, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule . . . [that] we call Empire." This Empire should not be confused with "imperialism," which merely extended the sovereignty of European states beyond their boundaries. By contrast, Empire is a "decentered and deterritorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm" with its hybrid identities and flexible hierarchies, eradicating nationalist colors of the imperialist map of the world and blending them in the imperial global rainbow. The creation of wealth within it tends ever more toward "biopolitical production, the production of social life itself."

Empire differs from imperialism in that it is not based in any one "nation." The United States does not form the center of the project, and America's apparently privileged position in Empire will not prevent its absorption by the emerging financial, cultural, and juridical networks. It goes beyond space and time and effectively suspends history: From its perspective, this is the way things will always be and were always meant to be. It is total, creating the world it inhabits. It not only regulates human nature but seeks to rule over it. Last, but by no means least, "although the practice of Empire is continually bathed in blood, [its] concept is always dedicated to peace." It "presents its order as permanent, eternal, and necessary."

Empire's designated enemies are at once banalized, reduced to an object of routine police repression, and absolutized as the Enemy, an absolute threat to the ethical order. (The book was finished long before the bombing of Kosovo, so the authors cite the Gulf War as an articulated example of the demonizing process.) Empire is formed not on the basis of force itself, but on the capacity to present force as being in the service of right and peace. The intervening authority can define "every time in an exceptional way" the demands of intervention and then deploy the rhetorical force of the media and the police force of "the international community." Supranational subjects, legitimated not by codified right but by *ad hoc* consensus, intervene in the name of any type of emergency or overriding moral principle. The rule of law is replaced by the legitimacy of universal values.

For all of Empire's powers of oppression and destruction, Hardt and Negri warn that we should not feel nostalgic for the order of yore, which to them was nothing but the "old forms of domination." The passage to Empire and globalization "offer[s] new possibilities to the forces of liberation," and "our political task . . . is not simply to resist these processes but to reorganize them and redirect them towards new ends."

For the authors, the emerging Empire is useful and necessary because it destroys the barriers to Hardt's and Negri's preferred eschatological model. It cleanses societies of the burden of traditional identity and clears the way for the eventual unleashing of the political energies of the multitude—the Third World multitude, to be precise. The new, globalized world makes the march of that multitude across "Western" national borders and the destruction of the host societies' construct (the present Empire) inevitable. And so the resulting new barbarism will not be the end of history, but the beginning of a better world:

> The new barbarians destroy with an affirmative violence and trace new paths of life with their own material existence. These barbaric deployments work on human relations in general, but we can recognize them today first and foremost in corporeal relations and configurations of gender and sexuality. Conventional norms of corporeal and sexual relations between and within genders are increasingly open to challenge and transformation. Bodies themselves mutate to create new posthuman bodies. The first condition of this corporeal transformation is the recognition that human nature is in no way separate from nature as a whole, that there are no fixed and necessary boundaries between the human and the animal, the human and the machine, the male and the female, and so forth; it is the recognition that nature itself is an artificial terrain open to ever new mutation, mixtures and hybridizations.

When such ideas, *made in Frankfurt*, first gained credence with the 1970's New Left, they had a utopian ring. The critical mass required to make the transformation possible could not be found within the West, while the revolutionary potential of the Third World proved repeatedly disappointing. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the out-

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look seemed pretty grim from the Marxist perspective, but—as Hardt and Negri point out—the end of the Cold War has cleared the way for the rise of global Empire, and with it the new hope that all may turn out well in the end.

This is the key message of the book. Hardt and Negri are true revolutionaries who want to move beyond the Gramscian "long march," which has yielded ample results but cannot deliver the *coup de grace*. In the apparent defeat of revolutionary struggle—epitomized by the triumph of liberal capitalism over bolshevism—they find the seeds of future victory for revolutionary Marxism, which Empire makes possible by eradicating traditional structures capable of making one last stand. Empire admittedly introduces new forms of capitalist command and exploitation, but it is "objectively" an ally of the revolution ("liberation") not only because it destroys the remnants of the old order but because it contains the germ of another form of globalization: the counter-Empire of global communism that will be made possible by demographic change. The "political subjectivity" that emerges within this phase of history is the most expansive and fundamental political subject of all: The multitude is about to come into its own.

In summary, Hardt and Negri rejoice in all that we abhor. Read *Empire* to understand why Karl Marx is alive and well and supports the emerging global order of Albright, Blair, and Gates.

Srdja Trifkovic is the foreign-affairs editor for Chronicles.

Lighting Out for the Territory

by Philip Jenkins

Restless Nation:
Starting Over in America
by James M. Jasper
Chicago: University of Chicago Press;
275 pp., $25.00

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Restless Nation is an enjoyable exploration of the American national character. The book presents a plausible hypothesis, supported by the author's broad knowledge of the nation's history and social trends and illustrated throughout by aptly chosen literary references that reflect admirably wide reading. The problem is that, despite all these positives, I just don't buy the central argument, however much I have been forced to define exactly why I reject the basic notion of national restlessness.

James Jasper develops a familiar theme in the national self-concept, namely, the cliché that a country born on the move has never really ceased believing that a better life is to be found over the next hill. Insofar as there is a fundamental American myth, it is this national cult of restlessness, the faith in movement and change. From earliest times, Americans have believed that their real destiny lies somewhere else, where they will find the big break, the big money. Americans switch jobs and houses frequently, they change religions, they adopt new identities. Not for nothing is a very common type of indiscriminate religious enthusiasm known simply as "seeking."

And the concept of a nation of seekers is anything but new. As Tocqueville wrote in the 1830's,

> An American will build a house in which to pass his old age and sell it before the roof is on; he will plant a garden and rent it just as the trees are coming into bearing. . . . At first sight, there is something astonishing in this spectacle of so many lucky men restless in the midst of abundance.

The reference to "men" is appropriate, since Jasper stresses faith in movement as a distinctively masculine trait, one that appeals particularly to boys and young men. The shades of Huck and Jim are never far from the author's mind, but we could find countless other examples in culture high and low. Road films such as *Wild at Heart* or *Thelma and Louise* are obvious updatings of the Huck Finn myth, while Louis Malle's classic *Atlantic City* (1980) lovingly examines the world of those perpetual losers who have wandered to seek their fortune in this latest El Dorado. To take a sentence from a much-less-reputable film, Sam Peckinpah's *Convoy*, "The aim of the convoy is to keep on moving." For Jasper, this could be a national motto quite as valid as *E Pluribus Unum*.

Jasper sees restlessness and movement underlying political attitudes, the potent ideas of individualism and self-sufficiency that cause so much distrust of government. Indeed, American history has been shaped at least as much by its modes of transportation, its opportunities for seeking, as by its political ideologies. The successive societies created by the sailing ship, the Conestoga wagon, the steamboat, the train, and the automobile differed from each other quite as much as the eras so often described by merely political labels. This is especially true of urban life. As Thoreau wrote in the 1850's,

> Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, New Orleans and the rest are the names of wharves projecting into the sea (surrounded by the shops and dwellings of the merchants), good places to take in and to discharge a cargo.

Forty years later, another observer might well have described the cities of that era as chiefly rail depots, while modern cities have been shaped by the automobile. And the nature of American cities has another interesting connection to national restlessness, since the lack of an overwhelming metropolis such as London or Paris prevented the kind of total concentration of wealth and talent that occurred in other lands. People were thus encouraged and enabled to spread out over the continent.

Incessantly on the move, America has always been a nation in the process of renewing itself, a process constantly reinforced by successive waves of immigration. Though migration has occurred since the dawn of humanity, Jasper stresses both the astonishing volume of American immigration and the fact that it has never dried up, not even in the years of the most strict legal controls. And immigrants, he stresses, are by definition wedded to notions of novelty and rootlessness. They have a natural comprehension of the idea of constant flight, constant seeking, the fresh start. As D.H. Lawrence explained, "That's why most people have come to America, and still do come. To get away from everything they are and have been."

From the national characteristic of restlessness, Jasper moves on to describe what he sees as the negative consequences of the phenomenon in terms of anomie and lack of connection, and to wonder whether Americans are ready now to grow up and settle down. To a substantial degree, he explains mobility

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as a function of sexual identity and favors liberal social and governmental policies to counteract what he sees as a male flight from responsibility. It's easy enough to argue with his political agendas, but these do not detract from a thought-provoking book.

But is its thesis correct? There are two obvious objections, the first of which is that Americans, in their restlessness as in so much else, are not as unique as they like to think. A hundred years ago, Americans tended to portray themselves as homebodies in comparison with the imperialist European nations—in particular the British—then marauding across the globe. Despite the overwhelming influence London had on British life, inhabitants of the four island nations were at least as active movers and seekers as the Americans, and their heritage of restless movement survives today in the national myths of Canada and Australia. I think that Jasper also underestimates the powerful culture of movement and migration that has always existed in Europe, and which is steadily increasing in the context of European unification. And not just in Europe: Many Indians and Chinese remain happily in their villages over generations, but millions of others wander the world, creating vast diaspora populations. Like Americans, they seek their fortunes where the big money lures, and when political or economic circumstances turn difficult, they pull up stakes and move on.

I'm also skeptical about the whole question of American rootlessness. I may be prejudiced by my residence in Pennsylvania, the state with the most static population in the United States. Pennsylvanians very often grow up and die in the communities that their families settled, while some of the deepest-rooted of these communities are found in the most identifiable immigrant areas of its big cities, such as Philadelphia. Even tearing the heart out of the local economy does not succeed in driving them away. Nor, apparently, does a lack of zeal to move on reflect any failure to conform to masculine behavior patterns. If you believe the contrary, feel free to argue the point with any inhabitant of Italian South Philadelphia—still one of the most fiercely close-knit communities to be found anywhere. A good opening gambit might be to accuse the local residents of effeminacy because they are too scared to move west. Good luck.

Nor, of course, is this love of place solely an East Coast phenomenon. The Mormons may have found themselves in Utah at the end of a classically American piece of wandering and seeking; once there, however, they soon struck deep roots in their beloved land of Deseret, forming loyalties they still retain despite their sense of global mission. Missionaries sent off to Brazil or France return happily to their homes and raise families where their great-grandparents set up house. And I am told that even Texans, those descendants of the restless pioneers, still share a certain modest pride in their state, or at least in one of its many component regions.

Across the nation, we can still find countless examples of such authentic local communities, varying in size from whole states to tiny enclaves. Admittedly, their distinctive identities have been steadily eroded over the decades by the spread of national retail chains, generic fast-food restaurants, and so on. In other words, the factors making for restlessness and lack of communal identity have been increasing rapidly only in recent years, permitting Jasper to project these trends backward. Since local identities are weak now, he seems to argue, they never existed in the first place. To the contrary (I suggest), Americans, having so often demonstrated their fervent and irrational love for some particular chunk of ground with its attendant trees, rivers, and wildlife—or with the appropriate tenements, smokestacks, and mean streets, as the case may be—are no different from other peoples. They sit comfortably at home, year after year, occasionally reading accounts by better-educated liberal urbanites who seek to explain why Americans have no sense of roots.

I reject Jasper's analysis, and naturally I dismiss the policy formulations he has founded upon it. Jasper wishes to create a society based more on the allegedly feminine values of place and stability, in contrast to what he sees as a fading masculine restlessness characteristic of the historical phase we are moving beyond. Reading his book, I am reminded of a bitter line by Ian Fleming, who said that Americans had passed straight from adolescence to senility without experiencing maturity. Jasper advocates maturity, but his recommendations sound like a prescription for induced national senility.

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An American Original

by Loxley Nichols

Sister: The Life of Legendary American Interior Decorator Mrs. Henry Parish II
by Apple Parish Bartlett and Susan Bartlett Crater
New York: St. Martin's Press; 357 pp., $35.00

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In the world of blue bloods and blue books, where nicknames like "Oatsie," "Tootsie," "Bunny," and "Babe" abound, being called "Sister" isn't particularly unusual. Even in her professional life, Sister Parish never used her given name, Dorothy May, though regarding her nickname she once commented,

> It has not been an easy cross to bear. My husband constantly complained about the awkwardness of being married to a woman whom he called Sister. People who don't know me lower their eyes in embarrassment when the Lord's name is taken in vain in my presence. I often receive calls from religious groups asking me if I'd meet refugees at the dock. And when I was asked to help "do" the White House, a newspaper headline announced "Kennedys Pick Nun to Decorate White House."

Being a descendant of Cotton Mather and Oliver Wolcott and the granddaughter of Edith Wharton's physician had much to do with Sister's later success, but her lineage proved no protection against unpromising personal beginnings. A plain baby and poor student, Sister seemed destined for failure on all fronts. In first grade, she learned that "George Washington is Jesus' father." Her record did not improve thereafter. She spent a single year at Foxcroft, the tony finishing school in the horse country of Middleburg, Virginia, before ending her formal education without even a high-school diploma. Sister spent most of her time at Foxcroft in the infirmary, where it was "more comfortable" (she had learned how to induce nosebleeds by pushing a

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tender spot on her nose). About her withdrawal from Foxcroft, she says:

> At some point, the school became so alarmed at my utter lack of progress that they took a step unheard of in those days. They suggested that I be analyzed by a doctor. Mother took me to Dr. Draper. He was a psychiatrist, but he also was a relative, so that made it all right. He asked me, "Do you like school?" and Mother answered, "No." He asked, "Do you like riding?" and Mother answered, "Yes." He asked, "Do you believe in God?" and Mother answered, "No." Finally, he told me that I could leave. He asked Mother to stay.

Nothing was left untried in Sister's upbringing, but all efforts at instruction proved futile. During trips to Europe, Sister kept her eyes "closed tight in every cathedral." Not until she was 18 and revisiting her family's apartment in Paris did Sister feel the first stir of interest:

> I marveled at the delicately carved Louis XV and XVI fauteuils covered in exquisite stripes and damasks. I began to feel the love of painted furniture that has followed me through all my decorating. I knew I was discovering something important, but I didn't know why. The rest of the trip was spent touring French houses. This time, my eyes were open, and so was my heart. I was at last beginning to understand beauty and the role it would play in my life.

This ineffable feeling, together with her sense of tradition and family, was the rest of Sister's artistic sensibilities:

> Already, at eighteen, I had a deep, abiding belief in all things inherited, and all things of real lasting quality. I was not afraid of change, but I firmly believed in the continuity of values that I had learned while growing up. A sense of family and of home were the strongest values of all.

In Sister's family, pedigree was not just an exclusive club, but a sustaining "wire of character" that linked present to past generations.

Although not rebellious by nature, Sister, as a young newlywed, delighted in shocking her mother-in-law by painting a gift of ebony furniture white and having curtains made from mattress ticking. This was just the beginning of the shock waves Sister was to cause. When the stock market crashed and it looked as though the young Parishes would have to accustom themselves to a more modest lifestyle, Sister, who had been informally helping neighbors with decorating, took matters into her own hands and hung out a shingle. It took Harry three turns through Far Hills, New Jersey, before he noticed the small sign that read "Mrs. Henry Parish II Interiors." One of her very first jobs was helping a new restaurateur, Howard Johnson. She used aqua walls, aqua place mats, aqua uniforms. She did the job for "free ice cream" and "never used aqua again." Although Harry was a steadfast supporter of his wife's work and a beneficiary of her success, this step did not come without a price. An anticipated inheritance from Harry's uncle was forfeited because Sister had gone "into trade."

Sister Parish was born into the social elite, and she did stick close to her own kind, with some exceptions. In addition to many of the young staff at Parish-Hadley, Sister felt close to her black driver and the permanent residents of her beloved summer retreat at Dark Harbor, Maine. She was intrigued by celebrities and was the first to pay social visits when actors came to Dark Harbor, and she invited Andy Warhol to parties in New York. (At these gatherings, Warhol would remain closeted in one of Mrs. Parish's lavish bathrooms or observe the party mutely from a corner. Eventually, the invitations to Warhol stopped, Sister pronouncing him "no fun.")

Sister was quintessentially American, a pioneer who introduced informal, unpretentious craft materials into traditionally formal and highly sophisticated settings. Along with her partner, Albert Hadley, Sister invented the "American Country Style." In 1990, she wrote,

> Years ago, my partner, Albert Hadley, and I were delighted when patchwork quilts, four-poster beds, painted floors, knitted throws, rag rugs and hand woven bedsteads were first listed among the "innovations" of our firm. The list sounds old-fashioned, and no decorator wants to be that, but Albert and I understood that innovation is often the ability to reach into the past and bring back what is good, what is beautiful, what is lasting.

This biography is like one of Sister's lovely old patchwork quilts—or collages. Sister's daughter and granddaughter have assembled recollections from an array of family, friends, clients, and business associates—decorators, domestic staff, craftsmen and -women. These different voices combine to effect a delightful portrait of the grande dame of decorating, a crusty dowager with razor wit who makes Martha Stewart look like a Madison Avenue mock-up, a kind of talking billboard. The best parts of *Sister*, are, of course, those passages written by Sister herself. (She had tried to write an autobiography, and I assume these long passages are taken from those manuscripts.) Eloquent and witty, her stories end with just the right punch. Sister was the embodiment of wit and drama. She spoke in perfect hyperbole: "You can't paint it green—it would be fatal." But then, extreme language may have been necessary for the task at hand—"making the rich look right," as a *Women's Wear Daily* article put it. Her success may have come as much from knowledge of her clients as from her skills as a decorator. Sometimes Sister would take a client shopping and ask her to pick out the one piece in a shop she would most like to have. Usually, when the client selected an object, a tag underneath would say, "Hold for Mrs. Parish."

Sister Parish died in Dark Harbor in 1994 at age 84. In her final years, she had written, "The fog is closing in around me. I feel very alone. But I also feel content for the sense of continuity is still strong within me." Sister had requested that "America the Beautiful" be played at her funeral; she was laid to rest between her two Harrys, husband and son. Sister Parish worked for the rich, but her contribution to interior decorating and good taste has benefited craftsmen nationwide, and homes throughout the country.

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by Samuel Francis

Rout of the Republicans

The first thing to be said about the presidential election of 2000 is that George W. Bush and the Stupid Party lost miserably. This is true despite their actual victory in the great post-election Florida chicken-scratch because, without Ralph Nader on the ballot, Al Gore would have won the election easily. Nader's votes in Florida alone would mostly have gone to Gore and put the Democrat over the top almost as early as the TV networks originally predicted. The same is even more true in a number of other states, including Washington and Oregon. Exit polls estimate that some 47 percent of voters for Nader would have voted for Gore had Nader not been on the ballot. If it's conspiracy theories about the election you want, forget the Mossad manufacturing fake absentee ballots in Israel and the various frauds each party is supposed to have perpetrated in the Sunshine State. The real question is how much the Republicans paid Mr. Nader to stay in the election.

The meaning of the Gore-Nader vote is that all the pandering, all the big-tent compassionate conservatism, all the muting of traditional conservative themes and issues, all the hiding of the conservatives in the basement at the GOP convention, all the careful waffling in the party platform, all the outreach to blacks, Hispanics, women, homosexuals, Martians, and three-toed Lesbian Pacific Islanders in which George W. Bush and his Rainbow Republican allies enveloped themselves didn't help one little bit. In a word, the soft-right strategy of dulling the sharp edge of radical conservatism is a failure and an embarrassment. Let the facts be submitted to a candid world.

Black voters went for Al Gore by a whopping 90 percent—the largest proportion since 1984 and, before that, since at least 1960. The carefully deployed blacks at the Republican convention, the careful prance and prattle about affirmative action and Colin Powell's insulting convention speech in support of it—none of it worked. The Democrats, aided by the NAACP, virtually implicated Bush in the "hate-crime" murder of James Byrd in 1998 and nakedly relied on the exploitation of racial fear and hatred to mobilize black voters against the Republicans. In the closing days of the campaign, Gore told black audiences that Bush's "strict constructionism" meant a return to Jim Crow, the end of affirmative action, and the appointment of segregationist judges. What does the thin mewling of "compassion" have to say against the scream of racial paranoia that the Democrats unleashed?

Nor was Bush much more successful among women. He won only 43 percent of the female vote to Gore's 54 percent. The former number is a slight increase over Bob Dole's 38 percent, but Clinton also won 54 percent in 1996. Bush did gain a few points among white females, but a mammoth 94 percent of the black female vote went to Gore.

The Republican plan to cut into the Democrats' whopping 1996 majority among Hispanics was also a dismal flop. Dole carried only 21 percent of the Hispanic vote nationally; Bush raised that to 31 percent (against Gore's landslide 67 percent), but even that increase is deceptive. As Steve Sailer reported in a UPI story, Bush won a mere 18 percent of Hispanics in New York (where 85 percent voted for Hillary Clinton), 23 percent in California, 42 percent in his own state of Texas, and barely 50 percent in Florida. These are the four main states where Hispanics live and vote, and in none of them did Bush win anything approaching a clear majority. Even in Florida, the mainly Cuban Hispanic voting bloc went to Bush in large part out of anger over the Clinton administration's support for sending Elian Gonzalez back to Cuba. For all the soft-right rhetorical chicken-doodle about Bush's winning a majority of Hispanics in his own state, his 42 percent showing there was only slightly better than the 39 percent he won in his 1998 reelection campaign. His 23 percent Hispanic vote in California is not a significant improvement over Dole's 21 percent national figure in 1996, and some 23 percent of Hispanics in California also voted for Proposition 187 in 1994. In other words, about a quarter of California's Hispanic population normally votes Republican, and Bush's 23 percent added nothing substantial to that figure. All the pandering to Hispanics, all the jabbering in Spanish, all the abandonment of the powerful immigration issue availeth the Stupid Party naught. Hispanics vote for left-wing candidates not because Republican support for Prop. 187 and immigration control alienated them but because Hispanic voters tend to be leftish in their political sympathies.

If the presidential election proves anything, it is that race drives American politics. As the *Washington Times*' Ralph Z. Hallow reported the day after the vote, "race was the most potent factor in Tuesday's elections." With 90 percent of blacks and 67 percent of Hispanics (and 54 percent of Asians) all voting for the Democratic candidate, and with 59 percent of white males voting Republican, there can be no further doubt of that. The natural strategy for the Republican Party therefore is to abandon its foolish and fruitless efforts to win "inroads" among racial minorities and to concentrate on increasing its share of the white vote. As Peter Brimelow has argued, white Southerners face far more formidable racial opposition in their part of the country than the white Californians who have just become a minority in their own state. But even with black voters accounting for 40 percent of the electorate in the South and the Democrats winning 92 percent of their vote, white Southern Republicans still manage to carry most Southern states easily. That's because Southern whites vote as a bloc far more than whites outside the South (66 percent of whites in the South voted for Bush, compared to only 49 percent of whites in other regions). If Republicans could increase their national share of the white vote to a comparable level (65 percent or more), they would not have to worry so much about the opposing black, Hispanic, and Asian racial blocs.

But the Republicans will not beat the drums necessary to win those votes. They have abandoned immigration control and now boast of their support for open borders and making Puerto Rico a state. They have all but abandoned opposition to affirmative action, and their positions on such issues as hate-crime legislation and racial profiling are softening. Last year, GOP strategists boasted of having abandoned the "Southern strategy" that pulled white Southerners into their ranks

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in the first place; fortunately for the party, most whites have nowhere else to go and have not yet perceived that the party's leadership no longer thinks they're important enough to court.

One reason white voters have nowhere else to go but to the GOP is that the alternative party of the right, which is what the Reform Party promised to become with Pat Buchanan's seizure of it last year, has flopped even more drastically than the big-tent Republicans. There were three main reasons for Buchanan's miserable showing that do not really reflect on him or his campaign very much: the fixation of most conservatives on ridding themselves of the Clinton-Gore demons their own propaganda had created; the lack of appeal last year of the two main issues on which the Buchanan campaign chose to run, trade policy and an America First foreign policy; and the difficulty of winning control of the Reform Party in face of the determined opposition of the nuts that littered it when the Buchananites hit its beaches. Nevertheless, the Buchanan campaign proceeded to commit major tactical blunders that convinced most conservatives that its leader could not win or even make significant headway against the Republicans. The promotion of Lenora Fulani to cochairmanship of the campaign sent confusing signals to rank-and-file Buchananites and offered endless opportunities for Rush Limbaugh and the *Weekly Standard* to ridicule his claims to conservative purity. The preposterous prediction by campaign cochairman Pat Choate that Buchanan would win 35 percent of the popular vote because of the "coalition" that the Fulani alliance created only opened the whole campaign to further ridicule among politically sophisticated observers. Buchanan also managed to keep himself out of the public eye during most of the primary season and afterward, so that by the time he popped onto the national screen in Long Beach, California, for his party's convention, most voters had probably forgotten he was running at all and had long since made up their minds to support one of the two empty suits offered by the major parties. Buchanan's gall-bladder operation and repeated hospitalizations thereafter, the brawls at the Long Beach convention with the flying squirrels of the Natural Law Party, and the delay in receiving federal matching funds were further setbacks not entirely due to the candidate or his campaign. But, to top it all off, Buchanan chose as his running mate an obscure black John Birch Society member who soon turned out to have an ethics problem in her background. Ezola Foster brought absolutely nothing to the ticket—no stature, no votes, no balance, no reputation—and by picking her, Buchanan alienated racially conscious conservatives who had already been alienated by Bush's Rainbow Republican convention and might otherwise have been attracted to the Buchanan standard, and pushed himself back toward the fading movement-conservative ghetto from which Mrs. Foster came. The candidate who started off his two previous campaigns vowing to forge a new political identity of Middle American nationalism and populism thus wound up drifting back to mere conservative ideological torch-waving. For most of the rest of the campaign, Buchanan intoned predictable noises about abortion, homosexuals, and the culture war and abandoned the anti-corporate and pro-working-class themes that had won him both votes and sympathetic press attention in his first two races.

In fact, it was the Gore campaign that tried to sound the populist bugle with what was dubbed (by both his supporters and his foes) "class warfare." As the *Washington Post*'s Thomas Edsall noted in September, "Gore's aggressive pursuit of a populism that pits the middle class against the elite, corporations and the wealthy has provided a way to counter his major liability among white men: their doubts about his strength and leadership," and he attributed to this tactic the Vice President's rise in the polls in the "battleground states of Michigan, Ohio and Missouri that hold the balance of power in the 2000 election. Among all voters in each of these states," Gore "is either fully competitive with, or slightly ahead of" Bush. In the event, of course, Gore carried only one of these states, and Edsall noted in October that intensive anti-Gore efforts by the National Rifle Association in key swing states were countering Gore's appeal to white males. "The problem for Democrats," he reported, "is that gun control is unpopular among many of the swing voters both campaigns are targeting in the final weeks of the campaign, particularly in battle ground states—such as Michigan, Missouri, Ohio and Pennsylvania—with a sizable bloc of hunters and other gun enthusiasts." In the end, Gore wound up with only 36 percent of the white-male vote, which is in the range of what Democratic presidential candidates have received since the 1970's. What made the Gore campaign somewhat unique among recent Democratic national campaigns was its effort to combine transparent racial appeals to nonwhites with economic populist appeals to white males. Gore won the nonwhite vote overwhelmingly but lost the white guys. In the end, race trumped economics.

And that should tell us something about the future, both of American politics in general and of the hard right in particular. The 2000 election proves that the soft right—the Beltway-based tub-thumpers for Economic Man, imperial globalism, big-government conservatism, multiracialism, open borders, and only the most tepid resistance to the dominant culture—is a political flop. Even those in the conservative establishment a bit more to the right were eager to ride along with George W. as he abandoned and muted almost every conservative theme and issue. Eventually, they may bolt over the direction the Bush administration is likely to take, but if and when they do, why should anyone pay any further attention to them? They helped legitimize and nominate Bush as a "compassionate conservative." More serious voices on the right need to be heard in the future.

And, given the clear racial alignments and polarizations revealed in the recent election, those voices need to say something significant about race. The silence of the Buchanan campaign about race and racial politics helped reduce it to single-digit figures in the opinion polls before it ever really started. The racial demagoguery of the Gore campaign helped it win as much of the vote as it did win—enough to take the election if Nader had not been on the ballot. And the confusions about race expressed by the Republicans convinced them to neglect their major political base among whites and led them into the fantasyland of multiracialism. White voters may now have nowhere else to go, but if an alternative should arise, they might well start flocking to it. There is little indication that the Stupid Party, no matter who leads it, will change its course or understand the real message of the election; and if the Republicans are unable to understand that message and act on it, the political future may yet belong to a non-Republican hard right that does.

C

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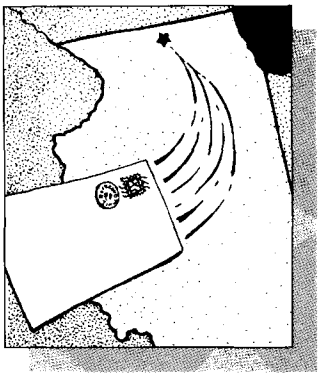
Letter From Rockford

by Scott P. Richert

Chaos and Community



I tune the radio to WLS, and the insistent voice of Tony Brown breaks me out of my trance. It's Saturday, December 9, the day after a bitterly divided Florida Supreme Court stretched (and possibly broke) Florida law in order to allow a statewide recount of undervotes in the presidential election. My family and I are driving back to Rockford from Chicago's Midway Airport, just hours before an equally divided U.S. Supreme Court will stop the recount in an activist decision more reminiscent of Earl Warren's reign as chief justice than William Rehnquist's.

"The state of Florida is in chaos! Absolute chaos!" claims Brown, and his caller agrees: "I just saw a headline that reads, 'Anarchy Reigns in Florida.'" That's funny; we've just returned from a week in Orlando—or rather, Walt Disney World, that Never-Never-Land that bears about as much resemblance to Orlando as Washington, D.C., does to the rest of the country. I can't say that I saw any anarchy or chaos; in fact, everything seemed perfectly scripted, right down to the airplanes and buses—which always arrived and departed on time—and the restaurants, which may have charged an arm and a leg but served their meals promptly and courteously. If this be chaos, let us make the most of it.

As Rockford draws closer, I'm hoping a bit of that Florida anarchy has rubbed off on my adopted hometown. When we left, our own recount was under way; with any luck, it created enough chaos that our streets have been properly plowed, which would be the first time in the six winters we've lived here.

Our contested election is for the 13th District seat on the Winnebago County Board. That may not seem nearly as exciting as the presidential recount, but it made a splash here in Rockford. As in the "important" election, the margin of victory was very small (45 votes), and the loser has asked for a hand recount because the counting machines appear to have classified some actual votes as undervotes. With Al Gore's loss, the Democrats have effectively been frozen out of the presidency and both houses of Congress, but there's a fair amount at stake here, too: If the election is reversed, one party will control three quarters of the seats on the county board, allowing it to impose its will even on issues where a supermajority is required. At the very least, that would mean local campaign contributors won't have to spread their money around.

Our recount, however, has come at the request of William Peterson, the Republican incumbent who lost to Democratic challenger James Peterson. As you might expect, when the roles are reversed, the rhetoric is, too. The Democratic executive director of the Rockford Board of Elections, Nancy Strain, has told the local Gannett paper (LGP) that "Hand counts are never as accurate as the machines." After a discovery recount of five of the 19 precincts in the district, she dismissed concerns that the number of ballots in two precincts didn't match the reported totals. "There were a few ballots missing," she said, "but that's because they're in another box."

Meanwhile, David Brown, the attorney for the Republican Peterson, sounds oddly like Gore attorney David Boies. "What we're concerned about is the high number of undervotes and illegible votes that maybe weren't picked up by the machines . . . What we want to make sure is that the will of the voter is followed," he told the LGP. That wouldn't mean counting chads—hanging, pregnant, or dimpled: Rockford has adopted a new optical-scanning system which combines the efficiency of a machine count with a much more secure paper trail than that left by our old punch-card system.

I know David Brown; he's a good attorney and an even better man, and if he believes there are grounds for a hand recount, he's probably right. I suspect, though, that there are any number of people in Florida who would say the same about Judge Charles Burton in Palm Beach County or his counterpart in Broward County. And that, in the end, is the point. If we truly want equal protection under the law, we're not going to get it from black-robed state or federal justices relying on a skewed interpretation of an illegally passed constitutional amendment. True equal protection comes from living in a community where we may not know everyone, but we know someone who knows someone who does. David Brown undoubtedly wants to win this contest for his client, but he also has a stake in Rockford and Winnebago County. Both his life in this community and his character—formed in large part by that life—place limits on how far he will go.

That's the reason why almost all states leave most of the details of elections—including federal ones—up to counties or local municipalities. The problem comes when outsiders—politicians, lawyers, even judges—view our communities merely as resources to be mined for votes. Does Al Gore or David Boies or the Florida Supreme Court really care about making sure that "all the voters are heard" in West Palm Beach? Of course not, but Charles Burton probably does, if only because they are the people among whom he lives and works. Who's more likely to have the interests of the residents of Winnebago County Board District 13 at heart, David Brown or some hired gun from state or national Republican headquarters? There's no doubt in my mind.

The radio signal is breaking up as another caller tells Tony Brown that too few people realize that God reigns, not men. Brown heartily agrees, saying that he assumes this means the caller isn't too concerned which man becomes president. Oh, no, the caller replies. "It's important that Bush win because of the Supreme Court. Without liberal activist judges, there would be no abortions in this country."

I sigh as we exit I-90 onto the unplowed streets of Rockford. Chaos or no, it's good to be home.

c

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Letter From Ireland

by Thomas Fleming

Bad Catholics, Good Europeans

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"Irish Americans are often disappointed when they come here," remarked the Scottish chatelaine of our pretty B&B on the Dingle Peninsula, as she served us our breakfast of scrambled eggs and smoked salmon. "They expect to see thatched cottages with leprechauns popping out from shamrocks."

"Played by Barry Fitzgerald or Arthur Shields?"

"Yes, and girls who look just like Maureen O'Hara in the movie . . . "

"*The Quiet Man*?"

"Yes, *The Quiet Man*. Ireland's not like that, now. It's quite a pushing and modern place."

In any American discussion of Ireland, the talk turns inevitably to films and books, though it has been said that the Irish struggled hundreds of years to gain their independence, and when they got it, they were a peasant people who had no use for any literature that was not Christian and uplifting. Yeats told the Dublin audience that rabbled the cast of O'Casey's *The Plow and the Stars* that the Irish people had disgraced themselves again, but in rereading O'Casey (a childhood favorite of mine), I tend to side with the mob. We saw no thatched roofs on the Dingle Peninsula, but we counted over ten on the back roads we took, driving in two days from Tralee (where we saw, just to the north, the Ardfert Cathedral with its delicate pattern of white and dark stone giving the impression of dice) over to Trim (whose half-ruined castle stood in for York in *Braveheart*).

The peninsula is a very beautiful place—imagine Nova Scotia littered with early Christian monuments—but like so many once-remote and wild places, it is being ruined. The omnipresent bungalows line the roads as regularly as trash cans on pick-up day in Rockford, and the town of Dingle itself is becoming a tourist center which might just as well be located next to Big Sur, on Martha's Vineyard, or in Door County, Wisconsin. We were on Dingle in early November, when most of the B&B's and tourist pubs were closed up for the season. Ashe's pub and restaurant in Camp had subsided into a local hangout, and the high winds (gusting to over 60 m.p.h.) blew the turf-fire smoke down the chimney and filled the room. The girl apologized, but my jacket still smells of the peat bog—the best souvenir (apart from a few hop flowers from James Guinness's hop garden) I took back from Ireland.

We are having breakfast on the seventh, just after Mr. Gore called Mr. Bush to tell him he had changed his mind. Our charming chatelaine, a self-described socialist, is naturally rooting for Al Gore. In Ireland, they apparently have been led to believe that Democrats are intelligent and educated people, but Republicans are ignorant rednecks. Would that it were so. If I had spent ten years watching the news on Irish One, the BBC, and Sky News and reading the Dublin press, I might have reached the same conclusion. There is, in fact, very little real difference in the point of view of journalists in Dublin, London, and New York. They share the same clichés, the same prejudices, the same blind spots. They are, as it were, Michael Kinsley writ large (though, to be honest, one does not have to use a large point size to beat Mr. Kinsley). Globalism is good, localism bad; the European Union may have its faults, but it is the best thing going; Clinton may have committed a criminal act in bombing Yugoslavia, but Mr. Bush's "isolationism" is terrifying; Mr. Bush is the candidate of big oil, and if Mr. Gore and his father took large sums from Occidental Petroleum, that is simply what all politicians do, and if Gore's position in Occi stock influenced the Clinton decision to prop up the military regime in Colombia, that decision is made in America's strategic interests, etc., etc.

I don't know how to say "etc." in Gaelic, but if I did, I would be one up on the Irish. As my Dublin cabdriver remarked, when I asked about his obvious problem in finding the Irish word for Halloween, "Sure we study it in school, but once you're out, it's shag-all for the Irish." (Perhaps I have seen too many movie previews, but I interpreted "shag" as a euphemism for the commonest word in the modern Dublin vocabulary.)

The big scandal in Dublin, trumping even former Prime Minister Charles Haughy's corruption scandal, was *l'affaire* Synon, inspired by a column written by Mary Ellen Synon in the Sunday *Independent*, lampooning the "Paralympics." Here in America, when Joe Bob Briggs lost his job for writing an offensively funny piece, "We Are the Weird," the story was given a few inches in the entertainment section. Miss Synon's entirely rational argument was front-page news for several days and filled the op-ed pages and letters columns for weeks. Denounced by all right-thinking people—political leftists, liberal Catholics, her reptilian colleagues in the press—Miss Synon was treated to the ultimate indignity of having to read her editor's public apology. Even Bertie Aherne, the Taoiseach (pronounced "tea-shock"—just say "teashop," one journalist told me, and they'll know what you mean), weighed in.

I know Ireland is a small country, but even a village of 500 people should have something more important to worry about than the heartrending spectacle of paraplegic gymnasts. Miss Synon was simply expressing, albeit in racy prose, her old-fashioned commitment to competitive excellence.

Miss Synon, who is a *Chronicles* reader (is that one source of her problems?), was wonderfully helpful to us throughout our stay in Dublin. We dined on classic Dublin fare in an Italian restaurant (with charming Indian waitresses). Before my *fritto misto* and bottle of Vernaccia di San Gimignano, I did have an unusual *primo*—a Kilkalty black pudding washed down by a glass of Jameson's.

The Dublin press, which speaks with virtually one voice on crippled gymnasts, is strangely divided on the E.U. Are they less than enthusiastic about all the benefits tiny Ireland is deriving from being one of the smallest states of Oceania? Far from it. But unlike their colleagues in New York and Washington, Irish journalists are reporting on the downside of glob-

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alism. Just in recent months, the E.U. has tried to clamp down on religious instruction in Ireland's schools, and the Irish are getting testy about losing control over their own fishing grounds: According to E.U. rules written by the major fishing nations, Irish fishermen are entitled to just seven percent of fish taken in their own waters. Even the Irish potato is under siege, as the country is flooded with foreign tubers. One E.U. supporter told me rather ruefully that he had driven back from Tipperary with a sack of local potatoes—"real Irish spuds."

For all the apparent abuses, few Irish intellectuals are willing to take up the cudgels for a "Little Ireland" policy. One sterling exception is Gerard Casey, a University College philosophy professor with an American Ph.D. Best known for his outspoken defense of Christian moral positions on abortion and divorce, Dr. Casey has also questioned the blessings of the E.U. Over lunch, he points out that Irish loyalty to Europe was understandable in the days when the union was showering the little island with development loans and investments, but now that they are being forced to pay up, they are even more loyal. Where the Irish used to describe someone, in moral terms, as a "good Catholic" or a "good Protestant," they now express their approval by saying, "He's a good European."

Ireland's new status as a province is especially evident on television. Looking for Irish news one afternoon, I found a short 5:00 program on the national Channel One, but it was in Gaelic, a language that is less known in Ireland than Spanish is in the United States. An hour later, there was an English-language program, and the lead story was the flooding in England. I might as well have been watching the BBC or Sky.

Roughly a fourth of the Republic's small population lives in or around Dublin, and as one journalist tells me, it is more like an extended village than a metropolis. By any standard, though, Dublin is a great international city, livelier than Chicago and more amusing than London. For all the Italian restaurants and American clubs, it remains Irish enough to seem foreign. Still, we were looking forward to our drive down to Kilkenny and Cashel and then over to Kerry—to "the real Ireland," as someone said.

Kilkenny and Cashel, among the top tourist destinations in Ireland, were not disappointing, though the experience of visiting them would be vastly improved if the people in charge of Irish antiquities could be persuaded to fire their tour guides and burn their videotapes. At Kilkenny Castle, the little girl giving the guided tour explained that Irish women in the bad old days never went outside, and they slept sitting up in their short beds because—I am not making this up—they had a superstitious fear of assuming the posture of a corpse in its grave. She is telling this little fable of the sophisticated Anglo-Irish Butlers in the skeptical age of Victoria.

My father did not like to think of himself as Irish, and from what I can calculate, he was three-fourths Scottish, though his grandfather, James Fleming, had come from Castleisland in County Kerry. I had always imagined Castleisland as a quiet little town—something like Castletown in *The Quiet Man*—surrounded by green, rolling hills leading, in a short walk, to the sea. The rolling hills are there, though the 20-mile walk would be long even by Irish standards, and although it was winter, they were green enough, even in the dreary cold rain, to make it seem like spring in Kerry.

Our Scottish chatelaine told us that she used to find Castleisland something of a joke. The farmers would double-park their trucks in the broad main street, making it a daunting task for any outsider to pass through the eye of the needle. In the blowing rain, we poked around in two churchyards but turned up no evidence of any Fleming ever having passed this way, though there is a Dr. Fleming in the telephone book and, so I had discovered on the internet, a caravan park. Our chatelaine suggests tactfully that the Flemings were substantial, propertied people, but if they were, they probably lost everything in a card game, as one of my father's maternal ancestors was said to have lost his holdings in a major utilities company in Chicago or as another refused to contest a large inheritance conned out of his father by a shifty Salvation Army officer who befriended him in his later years, saying, "I wouldn't take a penny of the old b----d's money."

Monks and friars take vows of poverty; my family takes to poverty more easily than to religion. Shaking his head when he found out I was going to church, the old man said that no one in our family's history had ever displayed a spiritual side (though his own family was devout). I protested: "You always told me there were bishops, even cardinals in the family."

"Of course there were, but I never said they were religious."

My father left the Irish-American Church in his teens and only returned to it in old age. I hear the same resentments today from educated Irishmen that I heard all the years I was growing up; but like it or not, Ireland can only be understood in Christian terms and only survived as a nation because of the Church. Yes, many of the greatest Irish rebels were Protestants or skeptics; and yes, the bishops said that hell wasn't hot enough for Charles Stewart Parnell, when his adultery was discovered; and yes, they even discouraged the teaching of Irish as a possible obstacle to maintaining the Faith.

To find "the real Ireland," you do not have to go all the way to places like the Dingle Peninsula, where the high crosses and church ruins stick out of the greensward like the earth's bones. Even in Dublin, Catholics have still managed to hold the line against infanticide.

Small nations in Europe have put their confidence in the European Union, hoping to find an equal place at the table, not only with France and the United Kingdom, but also—as a particle of a great empire—with the United States. Even the Scots and the Lombards turn to Ireland as the great success story. Perhaps they are all right; perhaps they will be able to eat their Kilkalty pudding and have it, too, though wrapped in a Styrofoam take-away carton. If you are one of the 50 million people admitting to Irish ancestry, buy your ticket now, before the Irish all turn into good Europeans.

Thomas Fleming is the editor of Chronicles *and the president of The Rockford Institute.*

Letter From Northern Illinois

by Aaron D. Wolf

Frozen Souls

◆

Kelli Moye has become the pretty young face of America's culture of death. Standing trial for the cold-blooded murder of her newborn daughter, she has provided us with a test case for Middle

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America. Should *Roe* v. *Wade* ever be overturned, states and municipalities will once again be free to pass legislation regulating abortion. How will the weakest and most vulnerable fare in America's heartland? Kelli Moye and the people of Boone County, Illinois, have provided us a chilling answer.

Poplar Grove, Illinois, some 14 miles northeast of Rockford on Highway 173, has a population of only 750. Fields of corn and soybeans surround the small town. Tractors heading to the fields often clog the highway in the fall as lines of cars make their way from Rockford to Edwards' Orchard on the northeast side of town, near North Boone High School.

Kelli Moye was a sophomore at North Boone in the winter of 1996 when, on the frigid morning of February 9, she gave birth to a daughter in her bedroom. After her mom and dad, Jim and Sue Moye, went to work at a nearby auto factory, she cleaned and dressed her six-and-a-half-pound daughter in a worn sleeper, wrapped her in a towel, and scampered through the next-door neighbors' yard. She carefully covered her tracks in the snow with imprints she made with her father's boots. Then, between a snow-covered tractor and the neighbors' back porch, she lay her daughter down for eternal sleep in the subzero wind.

When the neighbors found the newborn two days later, she was frozen solid; her body heat had melted a halo in the snow around her. The townspeople were shocked and outraged. They gathered at the Poplar Grove United Methodist Church, down the street from Kelli's home. "What name do you give this child?" asked the Rev. Mary Lundgren of the United Church of Christ of Belvidere. "Angelica Faith Grove," replied the standing-room-only crowd. They named her after the town, and because of the cherubic look on her tiny face captured in press photos. Kelli and her parents were among the congregation.

Moye's parents deny knowing that she had been pregnant. Her teachers at North Boone said she looked normal. She told the police that she hid her shape with baggy and oversized clothes. Not even the baby's father (Kelli's boyfriend, Michael Mirshak) knew she was expecting.

In the months after the baby was killed, Moye caused a ruckus at school, accusing other girls of being the mother of the abandoned child. Meanwhile, investigators cleared suspects connected to the neighbors' house. The truth would remain hidden for three-and-a-half years.

Having graduated from North Boone, Moye and Mirshak were cohabiting in Poplar Grove. One night, Michael—who has over a half-dozen arrests for petty theft and burglary—beat up on Kelli. Retreating to her old bedroom in her parents' home for solace, she showed them her bruises. When Michael came to get Kelli, the Moyes threatened to call the local police. Michael told them that they would regret calling in the law, making cryptic references to their daughter's dark secret. Kelli confessed her sin, and a tearful Mr. Moye called local police, who arrested both Kelli and Michael. After questioning, Mr. Mirshak was released on a $5,000 bond.

The press descended upon the tiny hamlet. ABC News, CNN, and all of the national papers reported on the "cheerleader-thin" mom who left her baby out in the snow to "die, apparently of exposure" in the freezing weather. A trial was set in Belvidere, the seat of Boone County, southeast of Rockford.

Miss Moye, on the advice of her public defender, Azhar Minhas, pled not guilty. Prosecutors, calling her a "cold, calculated killer," charged her with Murder One. As the trial unfolded, her attorney argued that Kelli (now 20) had a learning disorder, that she was a "scared kid," and that "At the time, she didn't know any better."

When Kelli Moye took the stand, she tried stoically to characterize the events of that frigid night and morning. She had cut the umbilical cord with a pair of household scissors. She claimed that she hoped the neighbors, despite the howling wind, would hear the baby's cries and rescue her. The prosecutor responded, "Why didn't you just have an abortion?" Moye replied, "I don't believe in it."

Mirshak, serving as a prosecutorial witness, expressed outrage to the media. "That was my daughter," he said. Moye had cleared him, admitting to prosecutors that she had kept her secret even from him because she wanted to keep him as her boyfriend.

Meanwhile, the townsfolk of Poplar Grove began to repent of their longing for justice. "She's suffered enough," one kindhearted lady told reporters, referring to Kelli. Fearing a not-guilty verdict on Murder One, attorneys for the prosecution offered the jury the unthinkable option of involuntary manslaughter—which they quickly accepted, returning their verdict. After all, 300 citizens of Poplar Grove and surrounding areas had signed a petition, insisting poor Kelli had been punished enough.

A bewildered prosecution team insisted they would get an extended sentence of up to ten years for Moye—instead of the mandatory two to five for involuntary manslaughter. Judge Rosemary Collins handed down her sentence on September 6, 2000. What is the life of a precious baby girl worth to the people of Boone County? Four years. Actually, with time served and good behavior, Moye's attorney assures us she'll be out in less than one.

Now, when folks drive out to the apple orchard for some cider doughnuts and jonagolds, they pass by a small graveyard where you can find a black headstone that reads: "I was born healthy on a cold, winter day and then abandoned in a stranger's back yard." Buried alongside little Angelica is the soul of Poplar Grove and Boone County, Illinois.

As I watched each of the horrifying details of this story unfold over the past few years, I though about how I'd passed by that cemetery scores of times since I was a kid, on my way to the orchard. I am also familiar with North Boone High School, having been a substitute teacher there. It was at North Boone, in the spring of 1995, that I vowed never to sub in public schools again. I had been given the assignment of showing a video of John Malkovich in *The Glass Menagerie* to the English literature class. One of the boys had snuck into the room ahead of time and popped an "adult" video into the VCR. Fortunately, during the lunch hour, I attempted to preview *The Glass Menagerie*, thwarting the potentially horrifying moment. My vow, however, came not then, but when I hauled the guilty party down to the principal's office, along with his tape. I don't remember the boy's name or the principal's, but I'll never forget the principal's response: "I'll give it back to him at the end of the day."

"I'm sorry?" I protested, as the boy giggled.

"Look," he said, motioning to the boy to go back to class. "You're just a sub. You should expect this sort of thing. Just make sure they don't kill each other in there." I left his office, red-faced and angry, and went right out the door.

When I learned about the young girl from Poplar Grove, it occurred to me that I might have had Kelli Moye in one of my classes that day. Whether I had or not, it all made a little more sense to me, having witnessed the chaotic atmosphere

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inside the school.

I wish I could say that overturning *Roe v. Wade* is the answer to the abortion tragedy. But no law can civilize the hearts of people in tiny farming hamlets such as Poplar Grove, let alone the more degenerate, larger urban centers. No law can make up for parents who marinate their children in our sex-drenched popular culture or refuse to shun their daughter when she decides to shack up with her boyfriend. Laws cannot counter the influence of 15 years of indoctrination in the degenerate public schools of America's heartland—especially those with high test scores, low crime, and small class sizes, which make sure they "leave no child behind" when it comes to destroying their souls.

Although Kelli Moye will probably emerge from her cell in a year, Angelica Faith will remain consigned to the ground until the Last Day. May those who value her memory set their face like a flint against the culture, making sure they sharpen the arrows in their own quivers first.

Aaron D. Wolf is the assistant editor of Chronicles.

Letter From Venice

by Andrei Navrozov

The Pavlovian Sandwich

◆

Giovanni and I were both in Milan for the day, and he asked me to join him for lunch at Bice with a friend of his, Lauren Bacall. The expensive restaurant was quite empty, we drank a good bit, and the conversation ranged from the actress's favorite *New Yorker* cartoon to the particulars of life in Venice. Then obliquely, in a stage whisper (for the most part inside my own mildly alcoholized brain), it went on to the mercurial ways of glamour and money, and this was what I continued to think about after we'd said our goodbyes, all the way back to Venice Santa Lucia. *The father rabbit, seeing off his son at the station, hands him a small package, saying: "Your mother wanted you to have this for luck. It's her foot."* That was the cartoon.

As for life in Venice, we got onto the subject when Miss Bacall dreamily recalled the finger sandwiches that used to be served on airplanes in the old days, when transcontinental air travel began to edge out the railways. We quickly established that the nearest thing going today is the *tramezzino*, and at that point Miss Bacall—I do not chide her, it's just the way people think—added, blithely, "at Harry's Bar." Now, the truth is that the *tramezzino* is as fundamentally Venetian as pizza is Neapolitan, with the consequence that every bar in town makes a sandwich at least as amazing as what is on offer at the Cipriani establishment—and for one tenth of the price. The tuna-and-tomato at the Rosa Salva in Campo S. Luca, for instance, is a minor masterpiece that stems from the same creative source as the comedy of Carlo Goldoni and the music of Benedetto Marcello.

"NO-O-O!?" said Miss Bacall, as if I had just told her that money grows on trees in Giovanni's garden on the Giudecca.

As I say, it's just the way people think. A person has certain clusters of associations in his head, and much of what he sees—even when he sees it with his very own eyes—tends to cling like wet snow to this or that existing nucleus, rather than conglobe afresh, spontaneously and capriciously. It is as though there is a snowman of sensibilities being made inside the brain, complete with coals for eyes and a carrot nose, and the more one witnesses and experiences, the bigger the snowman gets, without ever changing its recognizable contours. So in Miss Bacall's case, for example, the glamour of a flight to Los Angeles, in the days of her youth, adheres more easily to the waiters' jackets and starched tablecloths at Harry's Bar than to the greater Venice of unwashed tourist masses and the cheap cafés that presumably cater to them.

Consider the notion which I am tempted to regard in political terms: fresh orange juice. (If the idea of a great five-cent cigar, or a chicken in every pot, or Scotch whiskey on every secret-police chief's table can gain acceptance as a political symbol, I fail to see why my example should seem frivolous.) Italy is the only place in the world where asking for a glass of fresh orange juice—at any restaurant or bar, anywhere in Italy, at any time of day—means being given what has just been squeezed into the glass with the contractual aim of filling it, at room temperature, with the juice of fresh oranges. In England or the United States, by contrast, this notion—encompassing though it does a technologically uncomplicated process, squeezing, and a widely available commodity, oranges—belongs to the billionaire world of private jets, of terraces overlooking the ocean, of butlers, mistresses, and scandalous love triangles. Yet even the *Hello!* ambiance is no guarantee. An American billionaire I once stayed with in Beverly Hills, in a house poised above the cascading tiers of a vast orange grove, drank orange juice made from frozen concentrate.

The point is that, in Italy, people do not think less of the luxuries that cost little. Alistair McAlpine, an acquaintance of mine in Venice who has amassed world-class collections of everything from antique beads to farm machinery, once told me that, while the tiger cowrie mollusk has the most beautiful shell in the world, it is the far-less-splendid shell of the *Cypraea moneta* that circulated as a currency among the primitive peoples of the Pacific. Imagine selling a magnificent specimen of the *Cypraea tigris* for a handful of those dull cowrie shells, or swapping a bag of oranges for a can of concentrate, or gold for paper! How paradoxical; and yet, knowing that the perversity of man is only matched by his credulity, how utterly plausible.

It seems to me that, so long as the Italians continue to treat luxury as a specimen in a vast and serious collection illustrating the morphological diversity of life, they will not be overrun by money as other nations have been. Because money not only is not the key, it is often a barrier to luxury; witness the story of an Italian friend who went to stay at the Cala di Volpe in Sardinia, now owned by an American hotel chain and catering to those who, as the shrewd Arabic saying goes, "do not know the taste of their mouth." In the sumptuously appointed lobby, there is a long bar, dotted here and there with cash registers. These emit a distinctive whirring sound when operated (which they nearly always are), and this sound, my friend averred, is as quickly rooted in the hotel guest's consciousness as Pavlov's bell is in the salivation of the experimental dog.

"I want a drink"—"Here you are, sir"—PFRRRR, $49.50—"I want a boat for the day"—"The boat is waiting, sir"—PFRRRRRR, $6,905.00—"I want a woman for the evening"—"*Eccoci qua, Signore, la bella Svetlana!*"—PFRRRRR, $3,999.95—and so on, until checkout time. On his first night in his room, as

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he was luxuriating in his grandiose, canopied bed, it occurred to him to turn over and luxuriate on his side, but then—PFRRR!—he decided against it. He stayed put, flat on his back. "I swear to you," said my friend, "it was demonic. The very instant the desire to turn over took hold of me, straight away I could hear the whirring."

Let me restate my case. A terrible conundrum of our bourgeois civilization is whether money can buy happiness. I think it cannot be solved in one go, just as an advanced theorem of geometry cannot be proved by a pupil unfamiliar with the basic principles of Euclidean reasoning. An intermediate question to ponder, in this case, is whether money can buy ordinary comfort, such as the psychological freedom to turn in your bed any which way you please. The answer is: not always. A more advanced question is whether money can buy luxury, glamour, splendor; and here I point to Italy which—quietly but stubbornly—whispers, "no."

Brescia, then Verona, sped by, then Padua. I kept looking out the window of my train, a grimy InterCity originating in Zurich, thinking how odd it was that nobody at Bice made a fuss over my iconic *vis-à-vis*, that no woman came over squealing some Italian equivalent of "Oh, Miss Bacall, I just wanted to say, I saw you at the Academy Awards, and I'm so happy, my daughter was doing a lot of acting at Princeton last year, and I just wanted to say, I hope you don't mind my coming up like this, I think you're great, just great, and . . . " In 1867, on his way from Milan to Venice, Mark Twain recorded passing through the same old towns, wedded to the customs and steeped in the dreams of the elder ages, and perfectly unaware that the world turns round! And perfectly indifferent, too, as to whether it turns around or stands still. *They* have nothing to do but eat and sleep and sleep and eat, and toil a little when they can get a friend to stand by and keep them awake. *They* are not paid for thinking—*they* are not paid to fret about the world's concerns.

And yet, he concluded with unconcealed envy, "in their breasts, all their stupid lives long, resteth a peace that passeth understanding! How can men, calling themselves men, consent to be so degraded and happy?"

The answer, as I say, is in the Italian attitude to life's luxuries that is still in evidence today, the degraded and happy attitude that—at least in the green backwater of Venice for which I was headed—still resists the global Pavlovian training intended to link glamour with money. A wisely and freshly made sandwich, however cheap, is a greater luxury than a foolishly cut suit of clothes, however fancy the designer; freshly squeezed juice is the best thing to be had at breakfast, whether or not it is associated with swimming pools and movie stars; and a home-cooked Sunday lunch for 20, all cousins and aunts from as far afield as Treviso and Padua, is more glamorous than the veal escalope at Bice, however famous my luncheon companion and whether the world turns round.

It was a long, long ride. But toward evening, as we sat silent and hardly conscious of where we were—subdued into that meditative calm that comes so surely after a conversational storm—someone shouted: "VENICE!"

And sure enough, afloat on the placid sea a league away, lay a great city, with its towers and domes and steeples drowning in a golden mist of sunset.

Andrei Navrozov is Chronicles' *European correspondent.*

Sixth Annual

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by Srdja Trifkovic

A Balkans Policy for the New Administration

American policies in the Balkans over the past decade have come to embody all that is wrong with the fundamental assumptions of the decisionmakers in Washington. A thorough revision of those policies would be an important step toward a more pragmatic American strategy in world affairs based on the national interest.

This is no longer an isolated view. Increasing numbers of foreign-policy specialists and public-affairs analysts think that recent changes in Yugoslavia present the United States with an opportunity to revise its approach. The Rockford Institute took the initiative to assemble them and to allow them to air their opinions, aware that, in the absence of specific alternative proposals, the outgoing national-security team's prejudices and bureaucratic inertia may spill over to the new administration. The result was a conference held on November 14, 2000. Besides our own host team, the panel included experts from the World Bank, the Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation, Deloitte & Touche, the Free Congress Foundation, and senior policy analysts and advisors from both the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives.

The overall consensus of the panelists and participants was that the United States' failure to act promptly in adopting an evenhanded approach to the Balkans may cause a serious rift with the Europeans and reduce American leadership to a marginal role. To avoid future harm to its interests in the Balkans and elsewhere, the next administration should not base policy on personalities. The previous policy toward Serbia—based on the personality of one man, Slobodan Milosevic—should not be replaced with the unrealistic notion that his removal will solve all regional problems.

A pragmatic foreign policy demands a reassessment of U.S. relations with Yugoslavia based on regional stability and development and on the promotion of American commercial interests. The departure from office of those responsible for the Clinton administration's failures—notably Madeleine Albright, Richard Holbrooke, and President Clinton himself—should greatly improve the prospects for this reassessment.

The new foreign-policy team in Washington should give up the ongoing, open-ended, and ultimately futile "nation-building" mission in Kosovo. It should critically reexamine "humanitarian intervention" as both a concept and a policy, and recognize that it is counterproductive to challenge the notion of national sovereignty in the absence of a viable alternative. Any support for the idea of an independent Kosovo will further impair regional stability and damage American relations with our allies who are opposed to independence. The parties should work out a settlement for themselves, and the United States may offer its good offices in mediating negotiations—this time in the role of a genuinely honest broker acting in concert with its European allies in facilitating a solution, rather than trying to dictate one, as the Clinton administration was inclined to do.

The United States should cease all efforts to coerce the new government in Belgrade into surrendering persons indicted by The Hague Tribunal. Such efforts may result in more dangerous precedents, which—contrary to the American interest—are helping to establish a standing International Criminal Court (ICC), for which The Hague Tribunal for Yugoslavia and its counterpart for Rwanda are precursors. This point was reinforced by Yugoslavia's President Vojislav Kostunica, whose videotaped message to the conference contained a pointed warning against international jurisdictions:

> We know enough about the world to know that international politics can distort the idea of justice. Let me assure you: Anti-Serbianism is as common a prejudice in the Balkans as is anti-Americanism on the world stage. The essential case for justice, the need for it, is simply this: that the human heart craves it. We accept that the judicial process should be an integral part of eventual reconciliation. But the instrumentalization of judicial retaliation can only postpone effective reconciliation and make it more difficult. If there is to be a supranational alternative, it could only be a world tribunal to which all members of the United Nations submit their jurisdiction and their sovereignty. I am not suggesting that the creation of such a body is desirable, let alone inevitable; I am simply stating a fact.

The panelists agreed that one solution would be to repatriate the tribunal's functions to the Yugoslav successor states, including Serbia and Montenegro. In particular, the United States should regard as sufficient steps taken by the new authorities in Belgrade to hold their citizens criminally responsible for violations of domestic law. A supranational authority as a substitute for national sovereignty is unacceptable in principle and unenforceable in practice.

The conference concluded by recognizing that it is both possible and desirable to improve relations between the United States and Yugoslavia and to develop them on the basis of mutual respect, friendship, and common interest. The Milosevic regime was one obstacle to the development of such relations; the ideology of hegemonist interventionism that still prevails in America's foreign-policy establishment is another. It is contrary to the authentic tradition of the American republic, to its true interests, and to the will of the American people. By revising its approach to Yugoslavia and developing truly evenhanded policies that will be free from ideological and special-interest pressures, the new administration will act in the true American interest, as well as in the interest of peace, stability, and prosperity in the Balkans.

By standing firm on the key issues that affect Serbia's national interest, and especially by safeguarding its sovereignty *vis-à-vis* The Hague Tribunal and its territorial integrity with regard to Kosovo, the Kostunica government can also help promote new policies in Washington.

Through this conference, the Rockford Institute has made a modest contribution toward ending the imperial mindset that dominates America's public discourse. c

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POETRY

The Ax, the Scythe, and the Pen

by Bruce Guernsey

As we speed along the information highway at the close of one millennium and the beginning of another, it might be wise to stop for a moment, if not by woods on a snowy evening, at least at the next rest area. When Robert Frost slowed his mare to a halt that December night a hundred years ago, he knew he had all those famous promises to keep, but he also knew he needed a moment to reflect on his life, as maybe we do on our own—and our nation's—at this historic time. Like Frost, we need to listen.

Imagine him listening now. Instead of the rhythm of "easy wind and downy flake," what might he hear in how we speak today? As a poet, he would wonder about our language and the way we use this distinctly human tool. He would be sure to ask about our "gathering metaphor," Frost's term for how our words suggest who we are and what we value. We might have to explain to him how busy everything is these days, so much so that we speak in acronyms, hurriedly recited on a car phone as we access our PCs through AT&T—or, miles to go before we sleep, stop first at an ATM. Like his "little horse" that snowy night, hurry has become our habit, but we do more than shake our harness bells when there is some mistake. Rage is the rule of our roads, and speed the way we communicate, as each new corporate merger or government agency creates yet another set of initials that will vanish like footprints in a blizzard, leaving no tracks to say that anyone had ever been there at all.

And what can we really *do*, Frost might have reason to ask, pausing to watch us now. We work with the tips of our digits, not our hands, as word processors have replaced pens and intangible e-mail travels as fast as light. The grease monkey has tidied up and become the service technician, connecting sensing devices to an Explorer or Land Rover to get us from one shopping mall to the next—or to Wal-Mart for the less adventurous—where we barter our plastic numbers for some new device that should give us time to notice (though we seldom do) if the woods still left are "lovely, dark, and deep."

"What are your tools today, and what do they do?" Frost would want to know. He understood that what we put in our hands to work with—like the words that derive from that work—says a lot about who we are. "My favorite tools are the ax, the scythe, and the pen," he told a group of communist reporters on his notorious mission to the Soviet Union in 1962. These are certainly not ours today, these cutting tools of individual labor that form the metaphoric center of Frost's poetry.

Physical work is everywhere in Frost, and its presence is one of his most American traits, connecting him to Franklin, Emerson, and Whitman. The speaker was actually doing something in "After Apple Picking," and his arches still feel the ladder-rungs from climbing into a Macintosh tree. Frost makes us believe that his hands were the ones wielding that scythe in "Mowing," to the point that we can feel his arms ache. He hasn't hired anyone to do this work; that would be elitist, undemocratic—down-right European. No, he is the one out in the field, hands on that two-handled tool.

Those who still split firewood with an ax would agree with the speaker in "Two Tramps at Mudtime": There is indeed a pleasure in the rhythm of such work, as the arms and back rise and fall in a kind of northwoods dance that the poet calls "the life of muscles rocking soft." But this is a dance performed alone, and the out-of-work "tramps" who want to be hired don't quite understand why anyone would work for the sheer pleasure of it. But Frost's speaker does, and the tool he uses is clearly one that can only be lifted alone.

An ax is a very solitary instrument. It is a tool of separation, cleaving pine in clean-cut pieces and, simultaneously, isolating the person using it from those around him. "Stand back," a careful chopper says, not wanting to hurt anyone nearby but at the same time implying: I work by myself at this job, with this tool edged for splitting. Like the heartbeat thump of the ax, the scythe has its sound, too—one that is also allegorical. It "whispers" in "Mowing," but of what? Of things cut down. It speaks through sign language in "The Tuft of Flowers," where a patch of blooms left by a previous cutter suggests to the speaker that "men work together / Whether they work together or apart." This affirmative resolution to the otherwise isolated labor of the poem can't quite overcome the shadow of Father Time as he levels the grass with his scythe—his favorite tool, just as it was one of Frost's.

In "The Grindstone," the grinder, whom Frost calls a "Father-time-like man," rides that antique sharpening machine "Armed with a scythe." From Frost's fourth collection, *New Hampshire*, the poem follows immediately after "The Ax-Helve," whose French-Canadian chopper criticizes his Yankee counterpart for using a handle "'Made on machine,'" as suspicious of the factory and its products as was the poet himself. That old grindstone "under a ruinous live apple tree" may well have been used by Adam, or at least by us descendants of Cain: "For all I knew it may have sharpened spears / And arrowheads itself." As a machine, the simple grindstone is as complex and modern as can be found in Frost, who otherwise retreats as a "lone striker" from the early factory world.

Frost's crankiness toward the unionized, mechanized workplace is obvious throughout his career and best documented in the 1936 publication of *A Further Range*. The tools he praises and uses become subtle political statements; they are weapons of defense against not only nature's inevitable onset but the 20th century's collective voice. *The People, Yes* by Carl Sandburg was also published in 1936, and it beat out Frost's book for the Pulitzer Prize. Frost was mad enough to take an ax to the Illinois poet after he heard the news.

The ax and scythe connect Robert Frost with the early 20th century because these tools represent individual labor and the small farm, not unions and agribusiness. Not only metaphors linking character with time and place, they also symbolize the poet's political vision. Wary of anything "departmental," this self-styled "states' rights democrat" worked with and celebrated tools that affirm a stubborn in-

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dividuality—a "live free or die" kind of spirit like that of the state of New Hampshire, where most of them were written.

On their most primitive level, tools such as the ax and scythe aid physical survival by making a clearing in Frost's woods where the trees in "Spring Pools" "darken nature"—where they "blot out and drink up and sweep away" the "flowery waters" and "watery flowers." We have survived as a species because of these cutting tools and, Frost would say, maintain a sense of personal liberty by their continued, though out-of-date, use.

Surely, New England's poet-sage must have chuckled to himself when he answered the communist press the way he did. A man of the people? "The people yes, and no," as he once said in response to Sandburg's book. Never anonymous, the worker instead is a farm *hand* for Frost, for hands wield the kind of tools that separate, that make one *one*, not part of a bargaining unit.

The pen—that third tool on Frost's list—must have baffled those Soviet reporters who, no doubt, could understand the other two, given their flag's hammer and sickle. It had to worry *Pravda* some, a pen being the voice's tool. Had they read "Mending-Wall," they would have seen that Frost is as dexterous with language as his neighbor is with stones. Scalpel-like, his precise point separates that "old-stone savage armed" who won't go behind his father's saying from the sharp-tongued speaker. The pen is mightier than the wall, and its articulation divides light from dark—the apple orchard from the pine forest—for in the beginning, as Frost's Puritan forebears knew, was the Word that brought order out of chaos.

"A momentary stay against confusion"—Frost's famous definition for a poem—suggests a personal use for this special tool: to hold the poet himself together. "Definition" is a term we use today to describe a healthy body shape; but doesn't the interior world need to be "defined" as well? Surrounded by mental illness in his family and afraid of breakdown himself, Frost would have seen more than a pun in this connection between language and emotional health. "I armed myself against such bones as might be," he says in "The Census-Taker," "With the pitch-blackened stub of an ax-handle." Like that poem's speaker, but gripping a pen instead, the poet continually revisits the New England of his private past, where family ghosts haunt the cellar holes.

Frost's very last poem is worth quoting in full. Appropriately, it appears almost alone on the final page of poetry in the collected edition of 1969. The symbolism of these wrought lines on that snow-white page would not have escaped the poet's keen eye. He would also have been amused at the epigram that keeps cool company with this fierce last lyric. To "get adapted to my kind of fooling," that two-liner says, requires "in- and out-door schooling." A schooling in pens and scythes, perhaps?

And here he is at the end, an ax still in his hand:

In Winter in the Woods

In winter in the woods alone
Against the trees I go.
I mark a maple for my own
And lay the maple low.

At four o'clock I shoulder ax,
And in the afterglow
I link a line of shadowy tracks
Across the tinted snow.

I see in Nature no defeat
In one tree's overthrow
Or for myself in my retreat
For yet another blow.

This is some scene: an old man's winter day. The battle goes on "against" whatever darkens and diminishes, be it madness, maples, or the modern state. Outdoors, Frost cut an actual clearing with an ax or a scythe; indoors, using his pen, he opened an emotional wilderness, one poem at a time.

That pen has given way today to the word "processor," a term that suggests what Kraft does to cheese or Musak, to sound. We transmit information so quickly on these screens that the single word gets blurred among the blended many: Language synthesized, not purified, Frost might think. To purify the individual word is a deep part of his New England heritage, after all, and a pen's point etches each letter across the page.

In contrast, our tools today—our "devices," really—keep us from a sensory participation in the physical world. Just as an acronym is a kind of "virtual" word, so, too, is the computer worked not by muscle, but microscopic "chip." This chip is a long way from the chopping block, however. Though the communist state that Frost so hated is now largely gone, our devices of work and leisure, the PC and TV, have worked their synthesizing power upon us, blending and processing our habits and voices.

No wonder so many people bought generators and guns as December 31, 1999, approached. Fear is our reason for fences, and we are a people afraid because so much in our lives is out of our control: virtual, intangible.

"If design govern in a thing so small"—as it seems to in Frost's "Design," his allegorical poem about a "snow-drop spider"—what about the enormous but invisible webs that hold us today? "Don't go there," we would want to say to that poem's "white moth," the same anxious words we use for a "site" that isn't, which indeed may be more terrifying than one that is.

Reading Robert Frost again now that his century has closed might just be our own best stay against such confusion.

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TECHNOLOGY

Where Will You Be When the Lights Go Out?

by Clay Reynolds

I recently experienced the most dreadful feeling of helplessness and fear imaginable in what undergraduate essayists call "our modern world of high technology."

I suffered massive computer breakdown.

The failure of a single computer is bad enough, especially at a point in the semester when book orders and course syllabi are due and students are sending panicky e-mails about their diminishing chances of pulling a passing grade. My personal disaster, though, was not confined to a single machine but encompassed both my university office machine (hard-drive crash), and my two-year-old "state-of-the-art" personal computer (glitches) as well. The three-year-old "an-

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tique" on which my wife and daughter work—my last line of defense—also failed, the result of a "hardware incompatibility" error that cropped up for no apparent reason.

In about as much time as it takes to tell it, I went from having three functioning computers to having none. Suddenly, I was in a state of professional paralysis, lexicographic limbo, unable to complete work that was due or to locate information that would allow me to do preliminary preparation by hand. I couldn't even send e-mail to explain why I was delayed.

I spent nearly three days in the company of technicians or on the phone with technical-support personnel and more than $400 for repairs, upgrades, and advice. I also endured hours of sleepless worry over what might have been lost. Ultimately, I was relieved to have a repaired computer in my school office and an upgraded personal machine for my work at home, and my family was also happily back to the keyboard on their upgraded machine.

My level of confidence in technology, though, had sunk, and I began to consider the deeper implications of the role computers have come to play in our lives—both as facilitators of our work and containers of our professional achievement.

To paraphrase Winston Churchill, I, like many professional scholars and writers, came reluctantly to the school of high technology; but once there, I have made an attentive pupil. I initially resisted the whole idea of computer-assisted work. After all, I had written three books, several hundred articles, and volumes of correspondence on nothing more sophisticated than an old IBM Keytronic typewriter. One book was put through three drafts on a 1936 Model Royal. What need had I for such marvelous gizmos as floppy disks and word processors? *I* was a word processor, educated and trained to the purpose.

But my resistance eventually broke down. My argument about having a "tactile relationship" with my typewriter was so viciously scoffed at that I soon found myself nodding in bewilderment as Those in the Know impatiently explained the differences between bytes and bits, RAM and ROM, and argued the quality of one brand of machine or program over another. At present, I find myself the owner or caretaker of four machines (including a laptop) that require more maintenance and attention than my much older automobile—or, for that matter, than anything else of mine, including my dog and children.

My situation is hardly unique. Memos announcing everything from mandatory faculty meetings to major campus events are disseminated by e-mail and electronic bulletin boards; major committee meetings are sometimes conducted in "chat rooms"; and in some places, I understand, candidates for academic positions are invited to "online visits" rather than transported across country for face-to-face interviews.

Student papers, including drafts of theses and dissertations, are submitted via e-mail, and the notion of submitting hard copy of an article or essay to a journal is rapidly becoming passé. In the past six months, I have submitted and had published no fewer than half a dozen articles and reviews that I never saw in print until they came back to me in the form of contributor's copies.

So far, major publishing houses have held the line against purely electronic submissions, but even this trend is changing. Online publishing of significant works is rapidly on its way. As soon as copyright and restriction problems can be worked out—assuming that they can be worked out—e-texts will be as familiar to us as any bookshelf. It's quite possible that, within the next decade, the notion of actually seeing thoughts, ideas, or scholarship printed on paper and bound in a book or journal could be as arcane as television antennas or full-service gas stations.

Not everyone thinks this is a step forward. Michael Gorman, dean of library services at California State University, wrote a piece in 1994 (originally published in *Library Journal* and then *Chronicles*) in which he argues that the ultimate impact of this mad rush toward the "Electronic Library" has been poorly considered. He suggests that scholars have become "unwitting dupes" of "technovandals" who would push us into total electronic reliance. His concern is that the library and reading skills of an entire generation may be so utterly replaced by the virtual skills required to operate a computer that they may not be recoverable.

My week of electronic disasters gave me pause to consider all of this in a brighter and more natural light than that provided by my high-tech monitors. I, too, began to wonder if we are not courting the enormous risk of losing everything we know, everything we have done or accomplished—not merely as a generation or as a society, but as a civilization.

I'm not talking so much about a general "glitch" based on widespread program errors that can be corrected, or about viruses, or about the planned obsolescence of both machines and programs that renders "cutting edge" technology comparatively useless in a matter of months. And while I agree with Dr. Gorman that there are aesthetic and philosophical reasons for not replacing books and periodicals with digitized versions, I'm not addressing that question, either. What concerns me is our utter reliance on—and faith in—a system of data storage, production, retrieval, and restoration that depends upon one of the most vulnerable and depletable commodities in our "modern world of technology": electricity.

We are completely surrounded by electrified gadgetry, and we have become dependent upon it. From the air that circulates inside our hermetically sealed offices and windowless classrooms to the keeping of time and records, we rely on electricity to perform our work and to give our professional lives some semblance of order.

But what happens if we lose power—not temporarily, not just for a few days or weeks, but permanently? What happens then to our "store of knowledge"?

Everything human beings know, have learned, discovered, speculated about, hoped for, and feared reposes in printed matter. For more than a full millennium, these materials have been methodically collected, copied, then printed and reprinted and archived in hundreds of thousands of libraries, both public and private, around the world. If the technological revolution is carried out to its ultimate end and these libraries fall behind in their archival diligence—indeed, if they are phased out of existence—what happens if someday there is no electricity?

Many universities, including my own, have suspended some of their libraries' "hard copy" subscriptions to scholarly journals in favor of the much less expensive method of acquiring them via an electronic service provider. Where I work, only a few publications are presently involved, but it's possible that, within a few years, *all* academic periodicals may be transformed from hard copy to electronic form. As old, archived issues are electronically scanned, library stacks of periodicals might be eliminated as well.

If this spreads to book publication—and indications are that it will, rapidly—the library as we know it may become a

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thing of the past, going the way of livery stables and railroad depots—maintained as curiosities, perhaps, but not as viable institutions in a community's (or a college's) makeup. Already, this trend is in motion. Most of my students go to the library only after exhausting all efforts to find the data they need on the internet, and many tell me that they have managed four years of college without ever darkening the library's doors. Most major reference books are available on CD-ROM, and updates can be downloaded in minutes. Even those who need an actual library book can first locate it in the online catalogue, then scan and upload salient chapters or passages for use on a home or office computer.

I recently observed a high-school age student completing "research" for a paper during a two-hour layover at LAX, merely by plugging her laptop into a modem kiosk and hooking herself up to a library. She told me she would read the material she was downloading during her upcoming flight, then draft her paper and ship it to her teacher during another layover in St. Louis.

Methods of purchasing books have also changed dramatically over the past couple of years. With the advent of *Amazon.com*, bookstores are rapidly becoming anachronistic. Why, then, should libraries survive? They don't even offer croissants to their patrons.

It is entirely possible that everything mankind is, knows, or can become could wind up being stored on media that requires a functional wall socket merely to be read. But if all library materials are rendered electronically and our entire power supply—as a nation, as a continent, as a world— suddenly is lost, what then?

Surely this is the stuff of science fiction. Or is it? During military operations in the Balkans, NATO warplanes regularly bombed utility plants, attempting to destroy Serbia's means of producing and distributing electricity. Similar targets were attacked during the Gulf War; not only were Iraqi power plants destroyed, but oil wells—the means for creating the power—were attacked. Given the ability of today's military to attack interior locations, a general disruption—if not entire loss—of a nation's electrical power because of an act of war (or even of terrorism) is entirely conceivable.

A national crisis could also result in the suspension or long-term loss of electrical power. Electricity, after all, is a public utility and, as such, is subject to diversion at the pleasure of the government should some national or regional emergency arise. If meeting the needs created by some huge catastrophe demanded more electrical current for defense, or saving lives, or political integrity, then civilian needs would be suspended—maybe ended.

Moreover, our fossil-fuel resources are, as we are constantly reminded, finite. We can generate electricity by other means—nuclear power, for one—but again, such means are dependent on a fragile scheme of technology whose maintenance is itself largely dependent on electrical power. Nuclear-power plants are also targeted during military attacks, and they cannot be easily relocated and rebuilt. It might not be possible to do so at all unless the engineers and scientists have ready access to the data required to construct and operate such a plant.

Underlying the decision to place more and more of the world's written knowledge into electronic form is a complacent assumption that someone, somewhere is maintaining "hard copy" for "posterity." But for decades, community and academic libraries have seen steady reductions in budgets and declining space, personnel, and resources necessary to maintain and enlarge their holdings. What happens when even the contents of their oldest stacks are committed to "virtual" memory and the physical copies of books, periodicals, and documents are allowed to deteriorate—or are discarded?

And before pointing to the Library of Congress or a similar centralized repository as a "hard copy" archive, remember that, in the event of a nuclear attack, such institutions are generally located right at ground zero. Should a large-scale war of any kind occur, major national libraries in the world's capitals would be among the first buildings to be destroyed and the last to be defended. Moreover, neither cities nor libraries are immune from the ravages of fires, earthquakes, or weather-related disasters such as hurricanes or tornados.

I am not anticipating a nuclear war or even a natural disaster of such proportions. But should we come to the point where we rely on only a handful of locations—or even a single location—as our sole "hard copy" archive, we might be courting a catastrophe of monumental proportions. When the Library of Alexandria burned, the world lost as much as 90 percent of its store of learning.

The significant point here is that electronic documents do not exist—at least not in any reliable form that we can count on to be accessible for centuries to come. Even placing data on compact discs or recording tape is not a fail-safe plan for preservation, for such media still requires electricity and compatible hardware technology to be read. Where would we be if everything we published or recorded between, say, 1965 and 1980 had been placed exclusively on eight-track tape—the "cutting edge" of its time?

My first word-processing program was highly touted as one of the most efficient for use in academic work, and I embraced it fully. As a result, I now have 150 five-and-a-quarter-inch floppy disks (once "state of the art"), jammed with more than 500 documents, including five complete books and dozens of unpublished manuscripts. And I cannot read, retrieve, or print out any of it with my present system. No one can. The manufacturer of the program went out of business eight years ago. My only copy of the program deteriorated with use, developing an "unrecoverable fault" that will not allow me to access any of my documents, and no other program can "translate" them without the application.

Because I was cautious, I maintained hard copies of anything I deemed important. But there is still a great deal of work that is lost forever and which cannot be retrieved except through my imperfect human memory.

I wonder if the electronic media being used to store and even to publish the world's knowledge, philosophy, speculation, and thought might also be "outdated" one of these days; if the greatest works of all time might, at some point, be available only on a stack of media that is no more useful than one of my old floppy disks. Who is responsible for ensuring this will not happen? Who is monitoring the process? Those who push technology forward, developing new software and hardware almost daily?

My point is to call for caution in this rapid leap toward technological transfer of the written word to electronic media. I recommend that we—as academics, as writers, as educated people—demand that some physical artifact be kept safe and accessible, no matter how convenient or economically expedient it may be to rely completely on electronic devices.

In the meantime, I'm going to scroll up, re-read and proof this document, run my spellchecker, my grammar-checker, and prepare it for submission. But I shall

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also print a copy for my files. I never know when this system is going to crash again.

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FILM

Fictions Into Film

by Geoffrey Wagner

"I saw that book." Are we likely to hear this more and more from the next generation? A reviewer recently described a book by Joan Didion as "a novel that doesn't have to be filmed to make you feel you're watching it, not reading it."

Television adaptations of fiction are notoriously common these days, and the results are not always B movies. But box-office success seems to depend on exposing the hidden lives of various characters we had once believed to be stable. Take the cleverly filled-out case of *Mrs. Dalloway*, starring Vanessa Redgrave, or the recent *Great Expectations*. The problem is complicated when the subject includes both the writer and his works. The film version of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon*, for example, depicts a Hollywood hack at his worst and invites the viewer to peer directly into Fitzgerald's own life.

In major fiction, the yeasty chaos of creation has taken place, once and for all. The pundits of postmodern philosophy—Lacan, Derrida, Stanley Fish—may help us find fleeting cultural power in film, but such brilliance as we see in something as orderly as *Citizen Kane* owes to the use of a mechanical process. That process dates. Printed books may possess enduring craft, in their own right. And that right, affirmed in a famous essay by T.S. Eliot, suggests that true creation comes out of a tradition.

What if, then, there is no tradition behind your cultural form, only so many *Festschrifts* for famous directors like Hitchcock or Godard who, in *Contempt*, put his hat on a favorite actress (Brigitte Bardot) and called it direction, while in *Hail Mary* he portrayed the Virgin as a basketball-playing gas jerk?

Is the *cinéaste* meant to reply that such a director is creating tradition for the unenlightened future? Whole texts have by now appeared requiring our assent to the preeminence of French cinema, of Russian cinema, of the black-and-white mode, of pre-sound techniques. There is supposed to be a tradition of German cinema, represented by Josef von Sternberg and Werner Fassbander, although the latter's tradition is that of the Baader-Meinhof group.

The diminished role of characterization in modernist movies deprives us of illusions. The text—let us not call it a novel—was often heavy with coincidences, as in Dickens, Ibsen, and the 19th-century repertoire of fiction. John Sutherland has specialized in exposing absurdities of fact in this treasury (e.g., "Where does Fanny Hill keep her contraceptives?"). And there is surely something charming about the sewing together of relationships denied us in real life.

Obviously enough—*pace* McLuhan—today's cultural tense conspires to laud the visual over the verbal. Yet the French philosopher Lyotard insists that words can *make us see*. In discussing François Truffaut's indebtedness to certain fictions by Henry James (a novelist *pur sang* if ever there was one), Adeline R. Tintner refers to her cinematic renderings of James as "careful, almost reverential productions, faithful to the originals," but then adds that no film could ever possibly be "faithful" to a novel—"the media are simply too different to allow it." Is this the cardinal point we are left with?

Radical TV can be the gifted work of film editors and screenwriters for which we should be grateful; it can also be so many technical mutilations. Take one magisterial translation from fiction to film, namely, the recently resuscitated 1955 *Night of the Hunter*, based on a 1953 novel by the now-forgotten Davis Grubb. This production is notable for its director—Charles Laughton in his first and only effort—and its writer, novelist and film critic James Agee, as well as a good cast that includes Robert Mitchum, Shelley Winters, and an aging Lillian Gish. Superlatives were rained on this movie; Pauline Kael called it "one of the most frightening movies ever made." Today, how many "saw that book"? Perhaps the answer may be found in the words of the almost equally forgotten poet Karl Shapiro: "I didn't go to the funeral of poetry, I stayed home and watched it on television."

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Porta Negra

(Trier, Germany)

by B.R. Strahan

The breath of sun and rain
only darken on my face.
The cat claws of millennia,
the graffiti of tourists, fade on my walls.

I who guarded this city so long
sit truncated now, shouldering the sky.
My frieze the sweaty flesh of lovers
on cool bare stones.

Catch me in another thousand years,
your eyes as hard and black as mine.
See if these holes will match
the mysteries of death and flesh and stone.

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by George McCartney

Accidental Heroes, Ordinary Tragedies

Last year, M. Night Shyamalan performed a minor miracle: Flouting Hollywood's policy of giving the public what it's supposed to want, he found a way to tell a morally complex tale and, at the same time, make it a huge popular success. Using—at times strategically bending—the conventions of the traditional ghost story, he gave us *The Sixth Sense*, an uncommonly honest narrative about a boy and a man helping one another face their mortal losses. He even dared to invoke the austere vision of classical tragedy that counsels us to come to terms with our mortal condition by choosing to accept it. Only this, the Greeks believed, can release us from death's terrors. Shyamalan further suggested that such acceptance can be more than stoic: It can be Christian as well, for it enables us to recognize that the best way to deal with our own losses is to help others face theirs.

Executives in our popular-entertainment industry generally deem such notions insufficiently sunny. Shyamalan broke their one commandment—"Thou shalt not upset your audience"—with splendid results. And he did so without resorting to special effects, save the one he used to draw a genuinely intelligent and touching performance from his star, the usually insufferable Bruce Willis.

It's against Shyamalan's remarkable achievement that I want to discuss his new film, *Unbreakable*, which is, I am afraid, a remarkable failure. Returning with Willis once more, he has taken on even bigger game: nothing less daunting than the problem of evil theologically considered. (In a world created by an infinitely merciful, all-powerful God, how are we to explain infant leukemia, Joseph Stalin, and Nicaraguan mudslides?) To make his theology more palatable to the general audience he so clearly wants to reach, Shyamalan has chosen to dramatize this metaphysical issue within the conventions of superhero comic books. Unfortunately, his gambit seems wholly misconceived. At best, superhero stories offer little more than a cut-rate, Manichean universe of frozen either-or abstractions. Rendered in cartoon line drawings, their portraits of virtue and villainy merely gesture toward the subtle interplay of good and evil in our daily lives. It's simply not the arena for a tumble with the problem of evil.

Unbreakable

Produced by Touchstone and Blinding Edge Pictures
Written and directed by M. Night Shyamalan
Released by Buena Vista Pictures

You Can Count on Me

Produced by Cappa Production and The Shooting Gallery
Written and Directed by Ken Lonergan
Released by Paramount Classics

The narrative begins with an accident that brings together two men who have little in common but their biblically derived names. One is Elijah, played by a simmering Samuel L. Jackson. From birth, he has suffered from a condition that leaves his bones so brittle they break on the slightest impact. Having spent his childhood alternating between immobilizing plaster-casts and painful physical therapy, he has become obsessed with invulnerable superheros. As an adult, he makes his living running a gallery selling the work of comic-book illustrators. He doesn't deal in the mass-produced comics themselves but the artists' original pencil-and-pen drawings. The other man is David Dunn, an unassuming security guard played by Bruce Willis with the brooding bafflement of a decent man who has yet to find his life's purpose. Elijah seeks him out when he learns he has survived a catastrophic train wreck. Though all the other passengers were critically maimed or killed, David has emerged unscathed. Elijah becomes convinced that David has special powers, the kind he believes somehow inspire the intuitive imaginations of comic-book artists. As he explains, he's been "looking for someone at the other end of the spectrum" from his all-too-vulnerable self, "a person put here to protect the rest of us." In other words, a superhero. Not surprisingly, David initially rejects Elijah's notion. He assumes the art dealer is either delusional or trying to scam him. But Elijah pierces his skepticism when he asks him if he's ever been sick or injured. David can't remember. He asks his boss and then his wife. Neither recalls him ever taking a single sick day. (This is one of the film's many annoying implausibilities. I don't mean the superpowers. For the story's sake, I'm fully ready to believe in such gifts. But a man who cannot recall whether he has ever broken his radius ulna or come down with the flu? Please. We might forget what we ordered at the restaurant three months ago, but not if it gave us food poisoning.)

Step by step, David becomes aware that he is different after all. His adoring son, Joe (Spencer Treat Clark), becomes convinced even sooner. Without letting David know, Joe loads up his father's barbell with far more weight than he's used to. David only discovers this as he successfully bench-presses the bar. Surprised by his strength, he has the boy add more and more weight. To his amazement, he soon finds he's pressing 350 pounds. (Another implausibility. Would a responsible father such as David permit his ten-year-old to load a barbell, especially one resting precariously on a weight bench? Would he lift it without checking the weight?)

Such gaffes mar the film again and again, undermining our willingness to suspend our disbelief. In his rush to grapple with his theme, Shyamalan has neglected the basic principles of storytelling: The stranger your premise, the more convincing your details must be.

As for his theme, the problem of evil, Shyamalan has seriously overreached himself. Many artists have foundered on the same rock, of course, including those working in forms far more congenial to theological reflection than film. Think of Milton's struggle to put Satan in perspective.

While I applaud Shyamalan's desire to justify the ways of God to man, he needs to find a better vehicle than the comic book to do it, especially given his predilection for the somber, deliberate

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style that worked so well within the ghost-story conventions of *The Sixth Sense*. Applied to superhero antics, this approach can't help but seem leadenly pretentious. In an early scene, Elijah refuses to sell an original hand-drawn portrait of a superhero to a customer who intends to give it to his ten-year-old as a gift. With offended dignity, he angrily points out that, although such drawings are made to be translated into the cheaply colored panels of comic books, they themselves are nevertheless genuine works of art. At first, Shyamalan seems to be using the incident to reveal Elijah's obsessive nature. On reflection, however, I suspect the episode is his way of cordoning off his film from other superhero movies. *Batman*, we are to understand, is a vulgar live-action cartoon, while his film is genuine art. Such highmindedness is the flaw of a young man, and I hope the 30-year-old Shyamalan will outgrow it. There's nothing more aesthetically fatal.

If *Unbreakable* reveals Shyamalan's callowness, it also displays his ambition. How many other directors would dare to take on the issues he has? On these grounds alone, his film is worth viewing, despite its faults. Frankly, I'm hoping it's a commercial success. He deserves more turns at bat, but he may not get them if this film doesn't make money. Ideally, it will turn a modest profit, just enough to encourage his backers to fund another project on a smaller budget. Given the excesses on display in *Unbreakable*, I suspect he may need the discipline of a lean budget, which will force him to forgo special effects and rely on his ability to use the medium's own resources inventively. And knowing his script will appear before the world undisguised by big-budget frills, he'll be motivated to take more pains with his writing.

The low-budget independent film *You Can Count on Me* proves the point. Like *Unbreakable*, it also begins with a fatal accident; this one, however, leads to a far more compelling drama, without a special effect in sight. The film opens with a husband and wife driving home at night. Suddenly, their car swerves and collides with a truck, instantly orphaning their two young children. The film then jumps ahead 18 years to pick up the lives of the siblings as young adults.

Both have grown up profoundly marked by their loss, but like orphans everywhere, they are unwilling or unable to talk about it, even to each other. Their silence serves to reveal how profoundly their parents' deaths have haunted them every day of their lives. It's as though they have been knocked permanently off balance, perpetually unable to find the floor beneath their feet—a condition that has led them to make one ill-advised choice after another.

Now in her early 30's, Sammy (Laura Linney), the sister, has chosen an outwardly conventional life. She lives in her parents' house and works in the local bank in a small New York village. But all is not well. Her husband has left her, and she is rearing their eight-year-old son on her own. Her brother Terry (Mark Ruffalo), now in his late 20's, has become a drifter, picking up day labor from Alaska to Florida and getting himself arrested for brawling in bars. He doesn't help his case by smoking pot regularly and vegging out whenever there's a television to watch.

Despite their evident differences, these siblings are much more alike in their pain and uncertainty than either realizes.

Sammy strives for order and respectability but carries on in quite a disorderly—not to say disreputable—fashion. Although she has an intimate relationship with Bob (Jon Tenney), who loves and wants to marry her, she starts an affair with her new boss, Brian (Matthew Broderick), an insecure martinet with a very pregnant wife. Realizing her behavior is less than appropriate, she visits her minister, Ron (played with marvelously comic sobriety by writer-director Ken Lonergan). What, she wants to know, is the Church's current position on fornication and adultery? He answers with measured hesitance: "Well, it's a sin; but we don't focus on that aspect of it." He then asks about the "context" of her behavior, but she tells him she would prefer he chastise her. Ron refuses to bite. Seeing no alternative, she explains what prompts her liaisons with the two fellows. "I feel sorry for them; isn't that ridiculous?" Yes, it is; but it also makes sense in light of an earlier moment. Feeling restless one evening, she had called Bob. When he answered, she asked—without introducing herself—"What are you wearing?" Although she meant the question to be seductive, Bob heard it quite differently. After a perplexed pause, he ventured "Mom?" This is more than a joke; it reveals Sammy's need to mother men, especially sufferers and losers. Her own loss has left her preternaturally alert to pain in others, and she feels compelled to remedy it in any way she can.

This is why she is so disappointed with Terry when he comes home from his wanderings. After she's spent days preparing for his return—cleaning, cooking, and reminiscing—he rejects her mothering. He would prefer cash instead. He's gotten a girl pregnant and needs to "fix" the situation. As we watch him reluctantly reveal this, we shrink from the spectacle of Sammy's discomfiture. As things turn out, however, Terry does submit to a good deal of mothering after all. In his absence, his girlfriend attempts suicide, and her father makes it forcefully clear that he's no longer welcome. At Sammy's insistence, he agrees to move back into their parents' home with her until he can regain his composure.

At this point, we would expect a half-dozen emotional showdowns followed by a cleansing resolution of lifelong tensions, but this is not Lonergan's way. Instead, he has chosen to show these people in all their ordinariness, including their confusion and inarticulateness. They lack the heroic force for mold-breaking catharsis. What they do have is the mystery of their love for one another, however inexpressible and thwarted it may be.

Lonergan's film features fine performances by all, especially Linney, Ruffalo, and Tenney. With an unforced, all-too-believable narrative, he poignantly reminds us of life's remorseless consequences. c

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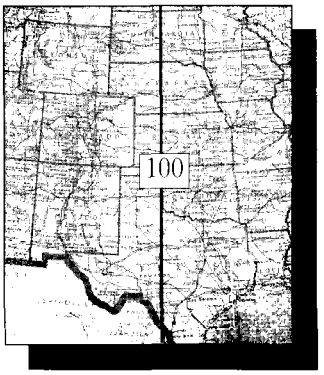
The Hundredth Meridian

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Democracy and the Art of Handloading

Swish . . . creak—*chunk*. Swish . . . creak—*chunk*. At the top of the press stroke the lubricated brass shell rises into the top of the press frame where it is engaged by the sizing die, screwed down and secured by the locking nut. On the downstroke it catches momentarily in the die before the expanding ball does its work and the shell pulls free with a wrenching sound, the force straining my arm and the 3/8-inch bolts securing the press to the table. Swish . . . creak—*chunk*. On the table behind the press are a couple of wooden trays drilled with 50 holes, ten rows of five each. The nearest tray is already nearly filled with decapped and resized .270 cartridges waiting to be primed and charged. No more American way to spend a snowy Wyoming morning than listening to Rush Limbaugh while handloading ammunition. "Is it *legal*?" a lady friend from Manchester, England, asked when I showed her my workbench. Well yes, it is—for now anyway, despite last year's presidential election, which was not just the worst thing to happen to the country since the Civil War, but amounts in fact to a second civil war, this one fought ignobly in the courts rather than on the field of battle.

From the vantage point of America Deserta, the vast red continent stretching between two thin blue littorals, the 2000 election looms larger than the electoral equivalent of the *Titanic* disaster, which produced a more sweeping reform of maritime administrative and procedural law than had ever occurred before or has since. The famous *USA Today* map starkly portrayed a nation comprising *two* majorities, geographically segregated from one other and having far less in common between them politically, philosophically, metaphysically, culturally, and racially speaking than the United and Confederate States of America shared. For the historical moment, these majorities stand evenly poised in influence and numbers: the Old America in a Mexican standoff with the New. One step beyond that moment—it is now



plain to both sides—and it will no longer make any difference that (as Ralph Raico observed) you can drive across America by almost any route without passing through a single county that had given its vote to Vice President Gore. One step off the balance, and the Old America will be tied down like Gulliver by the New, partly in accordance with the Democrats' Golden Rule (he who makes the rules gets the gold). And the votes. And the Western public lands. And plenty of other things, including the guns, of course.

Establishment commentators have chosen to interpret the closeness of the vote as a sign that the American people really aren't that far apart on the larger public issues. So far as I can tell, the truth is exactly opposite. George Bush and Al Gore, in spite of their Tweedledum and Tweedledee campaigns, stood—or at least, they came to stand—for the Old and the New America respectively, which explains the impressive voter turnout in certain areas as voters ran to the polls (or were driven there by mortuary limousines, etc.) to enlist as foot soldiers in the army of their choice. A reason, in fact, why so little of substance was debated during the fall campaign is that so little needed to be made explicit by either candidate: The voters knew instinctively what each of these men stood for in the broad ideological sense, where their sympathies lay, and whether they represented, not Democrat or Republican, but Friend or Enemy. As a result, last year's presidential election, beneath a veneer of civility, in reality was an emotionally charged battle—as I inferred from the obvious reluctance of people in the university town of Laramie to bring up the subject in public. When driven back (explicitly or implicitly) upon fundamental assumptions, politics becomes essentially a religious debate, it finds itself subject to the rules that, respecting religion, have governed polite society almost since the end of the Christian consensus.

Election 2000 will come to be recognized in a variety of ways as a watershed event. The first is its stunning demonstration that we really *are*—to an extent that John Dos Passos couldn't have imagined—two countries. The fundamental differentiation is between the New America and the Old. The Old America is the relaxed America, more or less comfortable and at peace with itself while prepared to make a few improvements and to add a few conveniences to its abundantly convenienced life. It is content to worship the Christian God, follow in the traditional folkways, observe the old forms, encounter the same faces on the street every day, and maintain the existing social and political structures, as well as the existing population. As far as government at every level goes, the Old America finally wants to be left alone by it—after rendering to Caesar what is due him—and get on with living its life on the terms it has been dealt, which it finds mostly satisfactory and for which it is happy to give thanks. It doesn't want to make itself over, or the world, and it believes that its fate—like the world's—is ultimately in God's hands. The mobilized America, on the other hand, has no place for God in its thinking and believes man's fate is of his own making. Assured that life finds meaning and significance in the public, not the personal, sphere, it treats every aspect of human experience as political and relegates everything political to the authority of the central state. Convinced that man is perfectible in this world rather than the next, and that perfectibility is a necessary function of time, it envisions a glorious future whose realization is the highest moral imperative. In the mobilized society, nothing is taken for granted, nothing assured, nothing sacred, or even safe. Instead, everything existing is suspect, everything provisionary, nothing of absolute value, nothing secure, and nothing unchanging, except change. On behalf of change, society is endlessly exhorted and closely regimented where opinion and personal behavior

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are concerned. No one is content with himself or with other people; no one satisfied with life—his own or his neighbor's or the nation's. People wish to be left alone solely to pursue their vices, some of which are encouraged by the regime; otherwise, they feel pleased and fulfilled only when inserting themselves into other people's lives. Unlike relaxed Americans, mobilized ones are not willing to live and let live. The Old America would deny the New America abortion, gay marriage, and certain other demands fundamentally at odds with natural law and traditional morality. The New America would deny the Old anything it finds incompatible with the progressive agenda *du jour*: tobacco, alcohol, fast food, red meat, keeping caged birds, hunting, rodeos, sport shooting, prayer at football games, hate speech, free speech, freedom of association, four-wheel-drive trucks, *guns*. Cheyenne, Wyoming, can tolerate the existence of New York City and Los Angeles, but L.A. and New York can't abide knowing that, out there on the steppes and in the mountains of the Great American Desert, the other America is leading an existence that fits its own particular circumstances, customs, and preferences.

It would be helpful if the two Americas, Old and New, were arranged on the map as conveniently as the Union and Confederacy once were. As things stand, the Old America cannot part company territorially with the New. (Even if that were possible, it would surely be viewed by Washington as another rogue nation needing to be converted—by force if necessary—to the principles of global democratic secularism.) This means the Old America has to confront the threat head on, though all signs point to what is likely, in the end, to be a losing fight, since the New America, as represented by the Democratic Party, holds most of the cards. One of the most striking phenomena displayed during the late election is how in the mind of the New America, the media, and even the Republican Party itself, the Democrats are regarded—and deferred to—as America's premier political party, not one of two equally privileged majoritarian factions. Again and again as the political drama in Florida unfolded, the Democrats' aggressive behavior and rhetoric, as well as the deference shown to the party by the media and certain of the courts, demonstrated the extent to which the Democratic Party perceives itself, and is widely perceived by the country at large, as the organizational embodiment of a national conscience. Two years ago the Republicans, aware of their peculiar disadvantage, allowed themselves to be intimidated in the impeachment proceedings; in Florida they recovered their nerve as their outrage increased and fought back—to the amazed indignation of their opponents. The Clintonized Democracy, the Republicans discovered, is run by highly dangerous people, people entirely capable of attempting to pull off what Bill Kristol—of all people!—has described as a coup. (Pat Caddell, Jimmy Carter's pollster, actually declared that his party had been taken over by gangsters.)

Equally plain to the Republicans, once the smoke of battle has cleared, *must be* the imminent danger of a coming one-party system in the United States. Through the welfare state, Third World immigration, an expedited citizenship process, and plain old demagoguery, the Democrats for the past 35 years have been practicing commercial voter farming on a grand scale. Little by little, election by election, these cultivated voters have paid off for them, until by 2000 they were crucial in the attempt to put a national Democratic ticket over the top; the final proof of their puissance would be their ability to keep it there. Several political observers, including Samuel Francis, have noted the extent to which the popular vote in this election divided clearly along racial lines. Immigration is not an issue defined exclusively by race, but race certainly is a component of it. Another potential result of 2000 may be that the mainstream of the Republican Party, and perhaps even its neoconservative wing, may be ready to reassess the dangers immigration poses to the American two-party system. By now, the neocons have pretty well succeeded in their goal of diluting the European majority in America to the point where, in decades to come, it is likely to find itself reduced to simply one among several minority groups. Is it possible they will take appropriate satisfaction from their accomplishment—and do an about-face on immigration in order to forfend a thousand-year Democratic Reich? If immigration continues unchecked, in 2004 there will be another six to ten million immigrants in the United States, all of them ready and willing to vote to put and to keep the Democratic Party in power. And if the GOP, still in control of Congress, fights to hold destructive Democratic legislation at bay, it will be accused of gridlock and tossed out by the Soccer Moms, the Million Mom Marchers, Handgun Control, Inc., the Sierra Club, and all the other usual suspects, and replaced by right-thinking thugs in the Democratic mob.

For years I've described the Republicans as being no more than the complementary shell of the American political walnut. To some extent they are that, but times are changing, and may change some more. For one thing, if the Republicans had their eyes shut before to the true nature, aim, and tactics of their opponents, they have had them opened wide now. Another is the collapse—for now, at least, and probably in the foreseeable future—of the third-party strategy. Pat Buchanan, it is safe to say, will never reach for the presidency again, while Ralph Nader, despite the ballyhoo the media generated on his behalf, has about as much mileage left in him, politically speaking, as a 1960 Corvair. Secure in the knowledge that Wyoming was as likely to go into the Gore column as palm trees are to sprout in the Wind River Mountains, I voted for Buchanan—and immediately regretted it when he announced that his 3,000 Palm Beach votes must have been intended for Al Gore. It's an awful thing to say, but in the circumstances we were probably lucky to have had George W. Bush to vote for in the 2000 election. Worse, I believe we will be lucky to have him—or someone half as palatable as he—to choose in 2004. *Unless*, of course, the Republican Party takes the events of 2000 to heart and generates enough fire in its belly to reorganize as the Democracy's true opposition. It's the only vehicle, in the short run, for holding disaster at bay (for the longer one, the hour may already be too late), and it needs reeducation, encouragement, inspiration. What, after all, does it stand to lose? The Hispanic vote, maybe? Don't make Arnold Torres, and the 65 percent of the Hispanic voting bloc that punched chads for Gore, laugh.

Swish . . . nudge . . . swish. The seater die operates swiftly, smoothly, almost silently, seating one 140-grain Spitzer Boattail bullet in every primed and charged cartridge, row after row of pretty pointed missiles three quarters of an inch long. Yes, it's legal; Wyoming is absolutely still Wyoming; and the U.S. of A., as of last hour's news broadcast, is still keeping up the fight to remain America.

c

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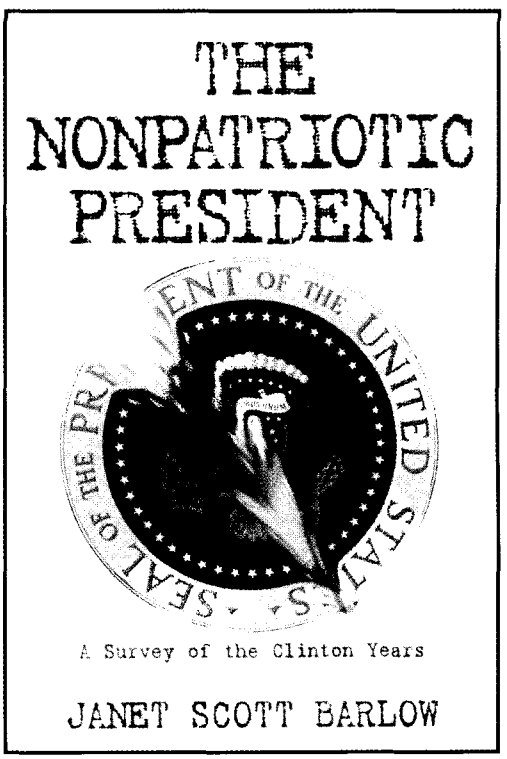

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